
NEW FRONTIERS FOR SOCIALISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

*Conversations on
a Global Journey*



Editors

Vishwas Satgar and Langa Zita

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a Global Journey*

Dedication

*For the oppressed and exploited,
For those committed to the truth,
For those willing to reject dogma*

And brave enough to journey at a new frontier.

NEW FRONTIERS FOR SOCIALISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Conversations on a Global Journey

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Co-operative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC)

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The Co-operative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC) was formed in 1999 as a grass roots development organisation. It began with an ambition to contribute, through a bottom up practice, to reconstruction and development in post-apartheid South Africa. It has thus orientated itself to build capacity amongst poor communities to achieve self reliant, collectively driven, sustainable and participatory development. COPAC's primary aim is to building human solidarity to sustain life.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CAW	Canadian Auto Workers
COPE	Congress of the People
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CP	Communist Party
CPG	Communist Party of Germany
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CUT	Central Única dos Trabalhadores (Unique Workers Center, Brazil)
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GLC	Greater London Council
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MERCUSOR	Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)
MST	Landless Workers Movement (Brazil)
NAFTA	North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDP	National Democratic Party (Canada)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PCF	French Communist Party
PDS	Party For Democratic Socialism (Germany)
PDS	Party of the Democratic Left (Italy)
PRD	Revolutionary Democratic Party (Mexico)
PT	Brazilian Workers Party
RDP	Revolutionary Democratic Party (Mexico)
SACP	South African Communist Party
SPD	Social Democratic Party (Germany)
SI	Socialist International
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Introduction

In December 1998 we embarked on a journey to various corners of the globe in an effort to find some of the most radical and original Marxist thinkers of the late 20th century. This journey proved extraordinarily fruitful, bringing us into contact with intellectuals and activists who have devoted their lives to the cause of transforming the world. Ten years later the insights proffered by the 15 interviews continue to help us make sense of the current crises and confirm many of the predictions offered. Despite the narrowing of political commitment to socialist renewal in South Africa, it is the timelessness and insightfulness of these conversations that have compelled us to publish the interviews in book form. The interviews address important questions of our time: Does the socialist left have alternatives to the crisis ridden model of global capitalism? If there is a confidence to challenge global capitalism are the emerging socialist alternatives still steeped in soviet, social democratic or national liberation orthodoxies that have failed? Or are we seeing the expression of socialist alternatives grounded in a critical appraisal of the past, a concrete understanding of transnationalising capitalism, a new imagination and a new ethics of means and ends? Has post-Soviet rethinking and practical ferment engendered new ways of engaging in socialist politics? Is socialist politics at a new frontier in the 21st century?

Historical Possibilities of the Current Global Capitalist Crisis

The irrationality of a globalised neoliberal capitalism is stark. State intervention has come back to the fore in the midst of a deepening global capitalist crisis, ironically to save capital from itself. When governments nationalize banks this is not socialism, but a necessary shift to state capitalism to rescue the system. As the tide recedes the 'golden years' of neoliberal orthodoxy and Western triumphalism is fading away, with the destruction left in the wake of this type of capitalism visible for all to see. Collapsing global trade, plummeting growth rates, imploding banks, ballooning unemployment and the backlash of environmental destruction reveal a profound civilizational crisis. Instead of addressing the deep structural roots of this crisis capitalist governments believe they can manage their way out of this crisis by addressing the symptoms. Technocratic attempts to fix housing markets, financial markets, commodity markets and currency markets have become the order of the day. Will this 'succeed'? Does the answer really lie in rescuing a hundred and fifty year old fossil fuel driven industrial system which has not worked to benefit the majority and which has come up against fundamental ecological limits?

The global capitalist crisis has placed us firmly on a path of transition. Various immanent historical possibilities can come to the fore. The first historical possibility relates to the response of ruling classes. All indications suggest that the approach most favoured by the world's ruling classes will attempt to ensure the survival of the existing system. In this regard, bail outs, re-regulation and neo-Keynesian stimulus packages could stabilize the crisis without challenging the underlying structures of a transnationalising capitalism such as global post-fordist production structures. Such a path will ensure that national and global stagnation will continue, finance capital will bounce back and unleash a more regulated financialisation and another round of boom/bust cycles will occur on a global scale. Modest increases in growth will happen alongside widening inequality, permanent unemployment for many and worsening ecological destruction. Developing countries will be given the policy room to address extreme forms of poverty through the Millennium Development Goals, for example; modest redistribution will be encouraged to pacify the workers and the poor. This is but one possible trajectory.

A second historical possibility emerging from the crisis of global capitalism is simply civilisational suicide. Central to the realization of this possibility is the question of ending US supremacy. Put differently, the US ruling classes and the dominant global ruling bloc fail to accept the limits and irrationality of imposing an Anglo-American capitalist model on the rest of the world. Instead of abandoning US supremacy and accepting a polycentric world with different social systems and logics of accumulation we continue down a path of imposed market-led development. The global crisis merely becomes an interlude in our long march to market dystopia. It should be remembered that the great depression was not merely solved through the 'New Deal'. The US economy and the rest of the capitalist world only recovered through plunging humanity into World War II. Today, the world has been drawn into a 'war on terror' which has already been used as a pretext for increased violence and is very likely to form the basis of a securitized approach to managing the global capitalist crisis. In the midst of the global capitalist crisis US military spending has continued to prime the military industrial complex.

Moreover, US aggression will further invite extremist and fundamentalist responses. Given the democratic deficit within neoliberalised democracies, a new wave of authoritarianism expressed through resurgent neo-fascisms, religious fundamentalism, reactionary nationalisms, xenophobia and racist violence will further come to the fore. Feeding into this is failed 'globalised state

capitalisms' in which the link between production and social reproduction has been broken. Deepening inequality and poverty becomes more than macro-trends and statistical averages, but the social reality for the vast majority. The middle classes continue credit-driven consumption and remain trapped on the consumerist treadmill; deluded that techno-fixes will solve the problems facing all of humanity and nature. State power is increasingly used to quell discontent. Finally, run-away global warming looms large and eventually becomes a basic fact. The ecological conditions of our existence are destroyed and we head for self extinction.

A third historical possibility we face at this conjuncture is a direct challenge to the system; humanity stands up and declares enough is enough. Global struggles led by progressive humanity shifts from mere intellectual exchanges through the World Social Forum and instead at various levels a new democratic left politics comes to the fore as the means to advance the struggle for a democratic eco-socialist alternative. Such a programmatic alternative is not an unreflective ideological answer. Instead it is grounded in a hard headed understanding of the accumulation dynamics of contemporary global capitalism, the limits and contradictions of this capitalism, and a critical appreciation of past attempts at left transformation. It is guided by new 'generative practices' that harness mass and state power from below and engenders new political instruments. In short, we embark on a much more confident and consistent journey to save humanity and our planet from the unreason and barbarism of global capitalism; we create the conditions for another world now in which the common good prevails and we end the destruction of the ecological conditions that sustain life. This book is about this third historical possibility.

Our Coordinates

The conversations in this collection were conducted over the period December 31st 1998 through February 13th 1999. We conducted these interviews face-to-face and many lasted for few hours. We travelled on various airlines to five continents, numerous regions, and many of the major cities on the planet. Within these cities we made our way on buses, trains, taxis and three wheelers; we waded through the hustle and bustle of these vibrant cities with street-smart decision-making and limited resources. We commenced our journey with Brazil, then the US, Japan, India, Sweden, Russia, Germany, France, England and then Italy. In these countries we interviewed activists, leaders and Marxist academics. We chose not to go to 'actually existing socialist regimes' such as

China, North Korea, Vietnam or Cuba because we believe these are not socialist societies, but rather transitional societies that have, in some cases, lost their way between capitalism and socialism.

Our journey was not anchored in a hypothesis or a theoretical dilemma. We went as activists, from the global south, to try and unearth the creative and new mutations within the Marxist tradition. We went to find the new analytical problematics, theoretical cultures, new organisational and strategic practices that would contribute to the advance of renewed socialist alternatives in a dying capitalist civilization. We posed questions that we think would challenge and pre-occupy the Marxist and non-Marxist anti-capitalist left for the greater part of the 21st Century.

The Challenge of Socialist Renewal in South Africa

Our ambitious journey derives from three coordinates that provided us with the reasons for our journey. The first coordinate relates to the limited and shallow nature of socialist renewal inside the South African Communist Party (SACP). With the collapse of the Soviet Union Joe Slovo initiated a debate and presented an important argument for the renewal of socialism. His pamphlet *Has Socialism Failed?* pointed to problems with Stalinism, the importance of reclaiming a social science basis for Marxist theory and practice as opposed to dogmatic orthodoxy, the importance of the link between socialism and democracy and the need to evaluate actually existing socialism through the category of 'socialist economic alienation'. In many ways, Slovo's contribution laid the basis for a new ideological and programmatic orientation in the South African Communist Party (SACP).

However, given the manner in which socialist renewal was inaugurated from above by Slovo and given that his disengagement from Stalinised Soviet Socialism merely scratched the surface, the process of socialist renewal in the SACP was highly contested from the early 1990s. An unreconstructed and Stalinised Marxism-Leninism challenged any attempt to recognize that a new socialism had to take political democracy very seriously. Instead, militant and dogmatic posturing refused to accept that the relationship between democracy and socialism could not be taken for granted. Put more sharply, there was a failure to recognize that socialism was not inherently democratic and neither was capitalism for that matter. Moreover, such dogmatic Marxist-Leninist positions failed to recognize that democracy itself was the product of class

struggles that spanned centuries. Doctrinaire Marxism-Leninism claimed that the workers constituted the majority in society and therefore the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was the most advanced form of democracy.

By 1995 the programmatic orientation of the SACP embraced the widening and deepening of democracy as a strategic task. This theoretical shift brought back the renewal impulse into the ideological universe of the SACP. However, by 1998 this impulse was fundamentally challenged with the election of a new General Secretary and the recomposition of the Central Committee such that it was increasingly populated with doctrinaire Marxist-Leninists. The national political education officer (Langa Zita) was purged from the head office and national political education around themes related to 'Our Marxism' was abandoned. Uneven practice inside the SACP, since 1998, around socialist renewal further undermined its capacity to inspire a new socialist politics. Internal party life increasingly degenerated with the dominant faction wielding both a bureaucratic centralism and a neo-Stalinist populism to take firm control of the SACP.

At the same time, the wider South African left also displayed a penchant for dogmatic certainties in the 1990s. Attempts at fostering left unity merely amounted to re-affirmations of faith. For some sections of the left, the revolutionary seizure of power seemed to separate them from the SACP. On the other hand, others, mainly in the trade unions, believed that a democratic corporatism coupled with an increasing social wage was sufficient to give capitalism a human face. For them socialism would be achieved through post World War II style social democracy. However, these three so-called left tendencies (Stalinised Marxism-Leninism, revolutionary socialism and social democracy) were not willing to participate in a journey of refinding a new basis for a common socialist politics. It was against this backdrop and our firm belief in the need to keep alive the project of socialist renewal and to strengthen its place within left politics in South Africa that we embarked on our global journey to find new frontiers for socialist politics.

Understanding the Crises of Neoliberal Global Capitalism

The second coordinate related to the crises ridden nature of global neoliberal capitalism. At the beginning of the 1990s Africa was in the throes of deepening structural adjustment despite all macro indicators pointing to failed market-led development. Mexico's economy crashed, the Asian economies were also

wrenched open through financialisation and most observers were talking about the 'Latin Americanisation' of post-Soviet Russia. Since the 1980s, this capitalist expansion was driven by a relentless and trenchant assertion of a global neo-liberal capitalist project; a class project of transnational capital. In most instances, elites and ruling classes in the global South capitulated and are champions of neo-liberal 'catch-up' development, anchored within commonplace assumptions about aid, foreign direct investment and trade. All this supposedly falling into place with market-driven policies. By the end of the 1990s, neoliberal restructuring of the global political economy began showing signs of failure. Poverty, inequality and unemployment were on the increase. Environmental destruction and resource-based conflicts also became a salient part of the global political economy. Iraq was invaded and NATO killed the Yugoslavian state. Despite claims that market democracy and neoliberal economics were the only solutions for humanity, this discourse increasingly came up against its own limitations. The obscene concentrations of wealth amongst a few individuals (the rise of billionaires) and the increasing structural power of transnational capital engendered deep discontent.

Neoliberalism, with its premises of unfettered individualism and market freedom, was producing a crises ridden model of global capitalism. 'Open economies', 'externally orientated economies', 'competitive economies' meant adjustment on the terms of transnational capital and not around people's needs and the requirements of nature. The logic of polarization and patterns of unequal development proliferated. So did the structural instabilities of national economies as national circuits of accumulation locked into globalised financial and production structures. Moreover, a powerful post-cold war global power structure came together at the level of a US-led historical bloc of forces to coordinate and manage global neoliberal restructuring. The launch of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the mid-1990s provided another crucial institutional and ideological pillar, alongside the IMF and World Bank, for the US-led historic bloc. The propaganda asserted by this global power structure claimed that space for national and regional development options was closing; the only political economy choice available was a world increasingly organized through the structural power of transnational capital and ultimately the US-led historic bloc. National interlocutors like finance departments, transnationalising class fractions, political parties, technocrats, pro-globalisation media and sections of the intelligentsia increasingly internalized and championed accumulation strategies (privatization, liberalization, deregulation, monetarism and private sector led development) that legitimized the interests of transnational capital.

This also found expression in post-apartheid South Africa.

Where was this going? Was the crisis in the peripheries going to engulf the capitalist heartlands? Was the global 'casino economy' going to unravel into a global crisis? Was the new information and communication technologies revolution going to save this model of neoliberal global capitalism or weaken its grip? Was globalizing more of the same the way forward? Almost a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was a horror ridden market civilization the real end of history? Inside the SACP these questions were not being asked about neoliberal capitalism. For example, in 1996, through the national political education secretariat of the SACP we wrote a critique of government's neoliberal macro-economic policy, but were not allowed to publish our paper in the SACP's theoretical journal. Thus, it is against the backdrop of the need to understand the global restructuring of neoliberal capitalism and its inherent crises that we found another crucial coordinate for our journey.

New forms of Socialist and Left Political Agency

The third coordinate for this journey was based on a recognition that the demise of the Soviet Union did not end the dialectic of history. The 1990s was punctuated with popular and class struggles against the neoliberalisation of national economies and regional economic blocs. These expressions of popular resistance were rooted in a self awareness of a new historical subjectivity, new forms of political organisation and agency. In Africa the tide of post-colonial democratisation coincided with popular resistance to the austerity measures of national structural adjustment. Riots against the dismantling of state subsidies for staple foods, for example, became a common feature. However, this wave of resistance did not mature into a counter-hegemonic project. In places like Zambia and Zimbabwe where trade union movements attempted a break with national liberation politics this did not translate into a new 'red tide'. In the 1990s Africa was showing the signs of a defeated continent.

This contrasted with resistance coming to the fore in Latin America and parts of Asia. In 1994, the Zapatistas emerged as a symbol of resistance against the North Atlantic Free Trade Area (NAFTA). While the Zapatista's imbued armed action with a new symbolic meaning the real expression of their politics was demonstrated through the importance of peoples assemblies and participatory democracy. Central to this was self conscious and self organised mass power. Powerful social movements like the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in

Brazil began showing a new way to organise solidarity from below through land seizures but also alternative economic models. A new 'counter-hegemonic generative' practice spawned socialised production relations through cooperative settlements. The institutional political left such as the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) also demonstrated the relevance of a post-Soviet and post-social democratic socialist orientation. The PT was also a new political form. It was not vanguardist and neither was it a narrow electoralist left party. The PT was a party movement. In its practice the PT attempted to articulate its programmatic platform in a manner that resonated with mass social movements. It tried to find common ideological and tactical positions with these movements while remaining mindful of the need to respect the autonomy of these mass movements. Moreover, its attempts at participatory budgeting in places like Porto Alegre also inspired a new way of thinking about the relationship between representative and participatory democracy. A similar but different experiment was also happening in Kerala, India, through the People's Campaign for Democratic Decentralisation led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Across the global North, the left was also seized with the challenge of finding a new identity. In many ways, the crucial dilemma for the socialist left related to defending the gains of social democracy and advancing a left alternative. This was extremely difficult given that the historical champions of social democracy were themselves becoming agents of neoliberalisation. Many social democratic parties were in power but were at the forefront of dismantling the welfare state. For the democratic left the question of strategic priorities was crucial: was a defensive struggle sufficient under the circumstances? Was there a need to go further and struggle for more? At the same time, European Union integration was shifting the terrain of anti-neoliberal struggle to the regional level and this required a new form of left agency and coordination. Was a European Left Party the solution? In national spaces the emergence of new left parties also marked a post-Soviet and post-social democratic politics in the Western world and in Eastern Europe. The Party for Democratic Socialism in Germany (PDS), the Left Party in Sweden, the Party of Labour in Russia and the refounded Communist Party in Italy were all attempting to define a new ideological basis for socialist politics and were evolving new practices on the terrain of political democracy. Some of these political forms did not succeed, but still had many lessons from which we could learn.

Finally, at a global level in the 1990s, a new transnational activism was beginning to emerge. The 1992 Rio Earth Summit provided a platform for over

2000 NGOs and the question of ecological crisis came to fore in the global consciousness. Later in the 1990s mass mobilisations took place against Third World debt, involving millions of people, and resistance to the Multi-lateral Agreement on Investment also strengthened the tide of anti-neoliberal protest. The making of a new anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist civil society raised important questions about internationalism and new forms of left coordination. In Latin America, the Sao Paulo forum of left parties provided one practical example. However, inside the SACP the connections between these developments and the project of socialist renewal were not being made. Understanding this emerging transnational activism and new forms of democratic left agency became a crucial coordinate for our journey. At the end of 1999, nine months after our journey, the world witnessed the confluence of anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist social forces in a powerful expression of resistance at the Seattle meeting of the WTO. This event signalled the emergence of a new post-Soviet, post-social democratic and post-national liberation left. The insights gained from our global journey in many ways anticipate the rise of this new form of transnational left activism.

Conversations About New Frontiers for Socialism in the 21st Century

Our coordinates guided us into conversations with Marxist activists, academics and leaders of new socialist political organisations. All the conversations we engaged in shared three common premises. First, nobody believed Stalinised Soviet socialism was a way forward in the 21st Century. Socialism defined as a one-party state, central planning, forced march industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture was considered to be an inappropriate conception and vision of socialism. Moreover, a socialism achieved in 'five years' and in 'one country' was a dead end. Capitalism required five hundred years of development since the time of mercantile capitalism. Not only did capitalism change relations of production, to allow the development of forces of production beyond feudalism, it also produced a civilisation with a powerful commodifying logic.

Challenging and transforming this logic requires a different conception of historical time. This does not mean thinking about the construction of a socialist alternative as a five hundred year task. Instead, what the historical experience of the 20th century called for was a new way of connecting the present with the future. Political projects in the present trying to connect with a socialist future need a new conception and practice of transition in national spaces, which has to be linked to the regional and global level. The importance of this was underlined

by the copying, transplanting and mimicking of Stalinised Soviet socialism and the crude caricatures it engendered in the Third World. Socialism in the Third World became synonymous with attempts at catch-up modernisation and were profoundly state centric. Such attempts at 'socialism' easily succumbed to authoritarianism and were 'nationalist populist' rather than genuinely radical. The impulse of mass power was eviscerated and this made it easy for ruling classes to advance perverse state capitalist relations while claiming to be building socialism. At the same time, social democracy also lost its transformative logic as it increasingly surrendered to neoliberalism. The social democratic project of managing capitalism to achieve socialism also failed in the twentieth century.

A second premise shared by our conversations related to the imperative of building a new socialism through democratic practices and new democratic forms. This required rethinking party forms, ideological foundations, strategic relationships, international dimensions and a different conception of state power. Many of the conversations placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of participatory and representative dimensions of democracy. This elevated the challenge of building capacity from below for a 21st century socialism. Instead of instrumentalising state power through vanguards or bureaucracies, mass and participatory logics need to be the basis for embedding state power. In the conversations we had, the role of participatory budgeting in Brazil and the peoples campaign for decentralisation, a form of participatory planning, in Kerala, India, showed concretely how mass and participatory logics could become the center of a new socialist politics in the 21st century. Moreover, the 'generative practices' of new social movements were also crucial in building capacity from below for a new socialism. This did not take away from the importance of representative democracy, but recognised that the central locus of a new socialist politics had to be civil society. State power needed to be harnessed to create the conditions for widening the base of bottom up socialist change.

A third premise related to the importance of renewing critique and struggle against contemporary global capitalism. This relates directly to accepting that socialism is not a blue print. It is not a grand plan imposed from above and merely based on reproducing the opposite of capitalism (capitalism equals private property, socialism equals public property and so on). Neither is socialism in the 21st century a natural outgrowth of capitalism. Socialism in the 21st century has to grow out of the lived experiences and struggles of historical

subjects. Such struggles have to attempt a resolution of the contemporary contradictions of global capitalism such as financialisation, a new imperialism, ecological crisis, inequality and the existence of new victims of capitalism. Hence, the Marxist theoretical underpinnings of a new socialism have to be further elaborated and cannot be held hostage by Stalinised Marxism-Leninism or any other Marxist orthodoxy. In this sense historical materialism, as a critical theoretical resource, has to be understood as unfinished. It has to evolve and renew itself as part of new struggles against global capitalism and through a new programmatic politics. In the conversations that follow various programmatic ideas and proposals are shared.

The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of ...

Between the grip of corrosive cynicism
and a blind folded political commitment
an adventurous dream sprouted
fertilised by the crisis of capitalism

Catching my vigilant curiosity
In the mapless spheres of my mind
sublimating in my hardened will
implanting a mathematics of the possible
edging closer to the real

Time dissipated
a historical bridge had to be crossed
we ended the debate
a practical breach was forced for humanity,
an inroad,
into the edifice of suffering

Today we cemented the roots of the dream
In the industrial heartland of Brazil
allowing it to blossom
now and in the seasons of our lives

Forever reminding us: We Shall Never Be The Same Again.



CHAPTER ONE

Paul Singer

*A Founding Member of the Brazilian Workers Party
and Senior Economist*

When and why did you join revolutionary struggle?

I joined early, in 1948. I was 16 years old. It was also a very exciting time internationally and in Brazil. After the Second World War there was a huge democratic tide in the world, including here in Brazil. We had a dictatorship up until 1945 and the labour movement and left in general were very active - political life was very lively. I was drawn towards the Socialist Party and it was being restarted. Brazilian political life has been interrupted periodically by dictatorships and every time dictatorships occurred all parties were wiped out and then when democracy is restored the parties re-emerge. Sometimes the parties were able to survive illegally during the dictatorship and sometimes they were not and then they were refounded. I had an informal association with the Socialist Party because I was young. This party was interrupted for some 20 years by the military regime.

What has been your role in the Workers Party (PT) and what is your current responsibility in the organisation?

I have been one of the many founders of PT. I started building the party before it was formally founded at the beginning of 1980. I was in the first national directorate of PT for about four years, between 1981 and 1985. I also helped to build PT here in Sao-Paulo, particularly in San Cecilia. I was president of the first district committee of PT at that time. Very soon I took over co-ordination of the economists of PT and I co-ordinated the first economic programme of PT, which was approved by the party in 1982. So, this is the story. I am not part of the national directorate any more but I am still active in PT as a kind of economic councilor, together with a large team of economists, not only here in Sao Paulo but all over the country. Besides that, I belong to the theoretical review of PT. There is a small editorial committee, which brings out this review, and I have been part of it over the past two or three years.

The Brazilian economy is the largest economy in Latin America. Can you give us some background to its economic development and how has it been experienced by ordinary people?

Brazil had a very rapid and intense economic development between 1930/40 and 1980. During these fifty odd years it became one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It was a very backward economy, even in South America. It was well below the average because Argentina, Uruguay and Chile were much more developed at that time. It is now one of the most developed countries in this region, has a strong industrial base and is also very urbanised. Over 80% of Brazilians now live in the cities. This has created an enormous inequality of incomes; that is the main result of all this. We have a relatively prosperous middle class, which is relatively small, maybe 10-15% of the population. They are big earners and big spenders and hence a central part of the domestic market. We have quite a sizeable amount of poor people, most in the North East, but they are also urbanised. There was an urbanisation of poverty in Brazil over the past 20 years. So in areas like Sao Paulo, Rio and so on, which are very rich areas, we also have lots of slums. A lot of poor people - about 20 million Brazilians are below the poverty line, which means about 12 or 13% of the population. So you have two extremes: very rich and very poor. In the middle you have all sorts of people.

Since the existence of PT, in the early 1980s, how have you thought about the economic problems confronting Brazil and what kinds of solutions have come to the fore?

There has been a relative change concerning this over the past 20 years. In the beginning the party was mainly concentrated on income distribution - the fight against poverty or absolute poverty. Basically getting a new balance, which entails making the rich less rich and the poor less poor. This was the main emphasis of the party and still is. However, since the economy was not growing since 1981, there is another problem now. Income distribution becomes very difficult when the economy is not growing and periodically falls into deeper recessions like we are falling into now. Then the poor get poorer and the rich become smaller in number - people fall down from the middle class due to unemployment and poverty and so on. So the fight against recession - the financial strangling - of the Brazilian economy, partly through foreign capital and the pressure from international markets is one of the main priorities from an economic policy point of view, besides income distribution.

There are about 12 million landless peasants in Brazil, with 95% of the land in the hands of about 5% of the population. How has PT thought about this question?

This is one of the classic issues of income and wealth inequality in Brazil. Agrarian reform has been on the agenda since I was a small kid, at least over the past 50 years, and for PT it is an important issue. There is some agrarian reform in parts of the country but much slower than we would like. At the moment there is an important Landless People's Movement in Brazil, a movement of landless workers, which is much stronger now in Brazil. It organises tens of thousands people in Brazil, mostly unemployed because of the crisis. They are occupying unproductive land all over Brazil and sometimes achieving situations where land is sold to the people.

Hyperinflation has plagued the Brazilian economy on several occasions. What is the thinking within PT on this particular issue?

We never could reach an agreement on hyperinflation. We never called it hyperinflation because hyperinflation is explosive inflation. We had constant very high inflation, 1000% over the last years, after 1987 until 1994. This was the main issue on the economic agenda until it stopped or stabilised in 1994. We had different interpretations of what caused inflation and how to fight inflation. I developed, with other people in PT, a theory that income distribution conflicts are the main source for the persistence of this inflation and therefore income does not only have to be redistributed but also has to be socially contracted so to say and, like Diane Elson described, it also requires committees which would then negotiate prices and wages together in order to have a more stable currency. Basically, stabilisation was important before we could begin income distribution. You cannot redistribute income in money that not only loses its value but also varies its value from day to day.

There has been a discussion in places like Europe and there is also some literature in Brazil about a basic income grant. Can you tell us about the debate in Brazil?

This is one of the important points in PT's programme and it has been raised by one of our important comrades, Eduardo Suplicy, who is Senator for Sao Paulo. He presented a project, a guaranteed minimum income for Brazil, which has been approved in Senate but the government is not interested in it. Fernando Henrique Cardoso when he was a Senator supported the project but now as President he is not interested anymore. But finally PT was able to implement a surrogate guaranteed minimum income in order to allow some poor families to keep their children in school, at municipal level. So we have such programmes

in several municipalities in Brazil which are now being adopted by states. Finally, there is also a law being signed by President Henrique Cardoso that permits the federal government to subsidise such programmes in poor municipalities. So there is some practical result with many poor children in public schools, who would not be there if such programmes did not exist. On the other hand, Eduardo Suplicy who is a specialist in basic incomes has brought to Brazil the ideas of a Belgian thinker, Van Parijs, and we had some important academic and political debates about the basic income grant. Suplicy and I are friends and we have been in support of a basic income grant but politically we are not able to secure such a minimum income for the country. We have to find a way of making it possible.

Some people believe that the basic income grant is only an idea for the developed world. How would you think about it in a country like Brazil, which is in the Third World?

It would be important to have income redistribution. It would mean instituting some kind of economic citizenship, not just political citizenship. If I am born in Brazil I am born with political rights. Also, in theory under the constitution, I have social rights. Those social rights don't reach me if I am poor and so on. I have to work and have an income. If we institute a basic income, even though it might be symbolic in the beginning, it would be an important step in trying to achieve equality in Brazil.

PT is committed to socialism but how different is this from the socialism of the former USSR?

It is very much so. This is an important issue in PT although it is merely for the theoretically minded people while for most party people this is not an issue. One thing I am clear about for us and that is socialism means more democracy, not less. It does not make sense to have socialism like in Cuba. Although we support Cuba and are friends with Fidel, we criticise Cuba because of a lack of democracy. On the economic side we are still working on that. What kind of socialist economy would we like to see? Many of us, particularly myself, believe central planning is not the answer. We want an economy in which there is no subordination and everybody should have equal opportunity. More than that, everybody should have equal participation in economic decision-making. At least under the present historical conditions it must be a market economy, to ensure consumers enough possibilities to influence the way the economy

evolves. It should be a sort of market socialism. We keep discussing this and it is not a sectarian discussion but rather more of a creative discussion.

What then is your concrete programme for achieving socialism in Brazil?

I would say my programme is to advance on three different fronts. Economically we could create a socialist economy inside the capitalist system mainly through co-operatives and other forms of associated production. The crisis of capitalism is creating this opportunity. The agrarian reform movement - the Landless Workers' Movement - is also creating co-operatives in areas where agrarian reform has already happened. About 200 000 families have benefited from agrarian reform, until recently. The Landless Workers' Movement influences about half of those. They are now organising co-operatives and collective forms of production and distribution. Then, in the cities, you have workers who are being organised in capitalist industries that have failed. They are in the hands of the workers, about ten thousand of them, and many other things are going on.

The other front is enlarging social rights, which are in the constitution, and making them a reality. Finally, on the political front we need to bring reform in the state - bringing democracy into the state apparatus - and open political decision-making to wider layers of the population. This might possibly mean mingling somehow direct and indirect democracy.

What is coming through from this response is if PT takes this forward you would be taking spaces and potentialities from below to construct socialism and that means electoral victory will not be the culminating moment. Actually, socialist transformation will start way before elections are contested and does not hinge on elections.

I am in absolute agreement. Socialism would actually be built out of processes which do not depend upon who is in government. Socialism must depend very much on the initiative of workers themselves, particularly unemployed and marginalised workers who can organise themselves through agrarian reform and other means and begin to build their own economy and their own society.

Can you tell us a bit about your experience as a city planner for PT, in Sao Paulo?

I was Secretary for Planning in the government, between 1989 and 1992, and I

have a whole book written on this experience called *Left Government for All*. I was in charge of the budget and we tried to create new priorities by making the poorest of the poor the main priority of government by bringing development and investment to the slum areas and favelas. We achieved this partially at least. We did it through the budget; participatory budgeting is one of the main experiences of PT, not only in Sao Paulo but everywhere. It is very interesting because it was not explicitly in our programme but everywhere PT became a government it tried to democratize the budgeting process by ensuring the poorest could influence it.

Did you experiment with socialist forms of co-ordination, in all these experiences?

There was a lot of democratisation from the grass roots. For instance, schools and hospitals and other agencies were directed through party committees. Users, workers and government also participated in the management. This was very important.

In retrospect, what would you do differently?

I would emphasise much more the fight against the crisis. We didn't do it at that time but we should do it more systematically. PT, in November 1998, secured an important victory in state elections and we should promote at this level and within cities, economic activities of a socialist character. In Porto Alegre they are doing this but after eleven years in power. It takes some time. The whole collective experience of co-operatives and so on was not practiced early on.

How did PT's perspective on the economic crisis in Brazil influence its electoral strategy in October and November of 1998?

We had an alternative strategy for the macro-economy of Brazil and we in fact proposed it in the campaign. The capital flight in Brazil was intense in September and the election took place in October; so months before the election the economic situation was bad. Since June and July, PT has come forward and argued to close the possibilities of free movement of capital; stopping the flight of capital and changing the economic strategy by re-accelerating economic growth by making some agreement with our creditors, without increasing the indebtedness of our economy. It was the opposite of what the government was doing. We had quite a lot of press coverage and it started to change the electoral

balance, but we did not have time. There was a small increase in our votes and we got more votes than all projections but it was still not enough. We got 32 % of the votes and the President 53% and he got re-elected. There was a second term of elections in November, and then we won most of the elections in which we took part. Now there is a caucus of oppositional governors, at a state level. More important there is movement against the present economic policies uniting industrialists and workers. It started in December through public meetings. The government does not have room to maneuver because of its relationship with the IMF and therefore a big clash is looming around economic policy.

What prevented the economic collapse in Brazil as compared to the Russian and Asian economies?

Brazil was able to attract new foreign capital after the first Asian crisis in 1997. We increased the interest rate and attracted large amounts of capital. Our foreign exchange reserves reached 74 billion dollars in the middle of 1997. We had a lot of room for capital flight. Between August and the rest of the year about 35 billion left the country. We lost almost 40% of our reserves but our reserves were still large, at about 30-something billion dollars and now we are receiving 40 billion dollars from the IMF and other related agencies. It is now a matter of time before we collapse, if we do not change our policies. But it may take one or two years. It is difficult to foresee when.

What is PT's view of the global economic crisis and how should the left respond?

The current crisis of capitalism is a big crisis, which may force a return to Keynesianism, but not on the same terms as the past. The principles of creating new forms of co-ordination amongst regional blocks like in the European political and monetary union is a trend and South America is likely to imitate this and follow the example of Europe. For North America it is more difficult to foresee what would happen. In Asia and Africa regional blocks will start co-ordinating themselves in order to protect themselves against the financial crisis. Once these blocks are in place it would be possible to find some kind of international co-ordination. It is very difficult to co-ordinate 180 different countries of all sizes and shapes but maybe it would be possible to co-ordinate ten regional blocks, which already have some form of co-ordination inside them.

What is your view on the regional economic challenges confronting Latin America and what is the role of the US in this?

The US has a proposal of American unification - one American free market. But a free market is very different from a common market. This is important. The free market means there are no obstacles to the free exchange of goods and capital between countries. Moreover, there is no unified position towards the rest of the world. On the other hand, the European common market attempts to unify the economic space inside the block and it has a common policy towards the rest of the world. Now, what Brazil together with Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay is proposing is a common market without the US. It makes a big difference because anything the US is involved in favours it 90%, like NAFTA. Currently there is a big debate in Latin America on this. For the first time, the US and Brazil are opposing each other. This is new because Brazil always played the role of the best friend and the ally.

If PT were to win elections in Brazil and the space widened for implementing a socialist programme, what would be the implications for the rest of Latin America?

Well, since we are coming closer economically and politically with Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and possibly Chile, Bolivia ... there is a strong trend towards expanding MERCUSOR towards South America. Any important political change in Argentina or Brazil will have strong implications in Latin America, not directly because we are not imperialist. But ideologically and politically we are getting closer and closer and now we have the group of Sao Paulo. This is made up of the leftist parties who are having a dialogue on issues. This is a result of the dictatorships, which forced most of us into exile in other Latin American countries, and we have more than one nationality now. Some of us are Chileans and we participated in Chilean struggles and even the Allende experience while we were there and this is also bringing us together.

Given that during the Cold War imperialism crushed even democratic attempts at advancing socialism in Latin America like in Chile, do you think in the post-Cold War era imperialism would let a radical socialist example advance in Latin America?

You are right, although there was very limited direct intervention like in Granada and Panama, which they occupied. While they were able to do this

militarily, politically it was difficult and so they intervened indirectly. This they did through economic and political pressures, connections through police, army and so on. But this was not decisive. The Chileans toppled Allende and while the US wanted to get rid of him before that, they were not able to until the internal conditions developed. The same applies to Fidel Castro. Cuba could not resist the US and the USSR could not defend it unless the appropriate internal political conditions were established.

Do you think the military would stand back in Brazil and let a radical programme be implemented?

It all depends on which way things happen. There was a pre-Revolutionary situation in 1964, for instance, but we had a coup. Things are not mechanical. It could or could not repeat itself but I cannot foresee what may happen. We were surprised in Chile and while we argued how different the military was from ours, they turned out to be alike after all.

What are the challenges and prospects for socialism in the 21st century?

I have to say there are better prospects now, as compared to before the fall of the Soviet Union. There was always an enormous ambivalence before the fall of the Soviet Union. Several questions were asked: What do we mean by socialism? What is the relationship between socialism and democracy? To what extent were the advances of the labour movement inside capitalist countries, compatible with or reinforcing capitalism? We have overcome these debates now and we are beginning to understand that building socialism is a century-long process and it is not something that would happen through a political revolution. It would have to be won through very many victories and the initiative of the people themselves, as social classes, is decisive. The clarification of these issues makes the prospects for socialism much brighter than before.

Trespass in Sao Paulo

The streets
long and wide
were an engineered
maze of modernity

Every step
every pace
was a mere comma

Hidden beneath the flashy status quo
of frenzied buying and selling
and monumental buildings
was a world of guttered hope
and fragmented belief

Lives turned into smoke

In this world
rain water mixed
with inlaid dirt
and warm piss
carpetting the tiled streets
with black grime

My boots
designed
like 4 wheel drive tyres
skidded in the muck

Leaving a trail of desperation

In my warm hotel bed
I realised my stampede
was inscribed on the concrete mattress
of a perfect stranger

A thought refusing to fade in my thin memory

CHAPTER TWO

Marco Aurelio Garcia

International Secretary of the Brazilian Workers Party

Why and when did you get involved in working-class politics?

I joined the Communist Party in 1959 and later in 1967 the Workers Communist Party. There were real workers in the latter organisation and it did not just sound communist. Unfortunately I had to leave the country and went to Chile where I worked as a Professor. There I joined a revolutionary organisation, which was very critical of the Popular Unity Front. I got out when Pinochet emerged. In 1974-75 I lived in France, working with the solidarity organisations.

In Brazil when the military started to open the political space I returned. At that time the new syndicalist movement was emerging and the Workers Party (PT) was also developing. I was in this movement and worked during the elections for PT. I am not a revolutionary any longer. I think I need to rest a bit. Ha! Ha! (The laughter continued for a while with everyone joining in.)

What are your current responsibilities in PT?

I am a member of the Executive National Commission and I am the Secretary for Foreign Relations.

PT is the largest socialist party in Latin America. It does not define itself as a socialist party in the Stalinist, social democratic or populist mould. It seems to be a new kind of political animal. Can you explain this?

I have written about this and I defined it as a post-communist and post-social democratic party. In Brazil it is part of the third generation of leftist parties. The first was the Communist Party itself. There is no social democratic tradition in Brazil. There has been something similar, which is called populism. The second generation appeared with the Cuban revolution, Maoism, and Trotskyism for a brief time. By 1964, the military was very prominent in Latin American politics and it was difficult to sustain this second generation of leftist forces. The first generation worked with the idea of the Soviet Revolution and the second generation with Cuba, Trotskyism and Maoism. The third generation has no historical reference point. It was anchored in the workers' struggles in 1978-79;

it was also at this time that many democratic and progressive movements appeared. Social movements in the cities were fighting for education, housing and health care. There were also movements for women's rights, gay and lesbian rights, as well as, youth, intellectual and the new ecological movements.

All these movements got around the three biggest problems in Brazil. The first is social. Brazil is one of the ten richest countries in the world, but has one of the worst income inequalities in the world. There is also a very big difference between the regions of the country. The second problem is the question of democracy. Brazil does not have a long history or experience with democracy, not even liberal democracy. The third problem is the national (or nationality) question. As the dictatorship started to fade during the 1980s, there were many national debates and discussions, which culminated in 1989 in the first direct election for a president since 1960. At that time Lula got 48%. It was a watershed in Brazilian politics. The bourgeoisie realised that a worker could be the President. At the same time, a new politics of neo-liberalism came to the fore. That's why the national question became an important issue in the 1990s.

There are a number of social movements that compose or make up PT. How do these social movements express themselves in PT and does this mean that PT is exercising a new kind of leadership or 'vanguardism'?

Social movements have been changing a lot during the eighties and the nineties. The eighties are an important decade in Brazil. The workers' movement built up a very strong tide of mobilisation in the 1970s which spilled over into the 1980s. A very strong workers' central organisation was built as a result of this. It is called CUT. Unfortunately, after this the crisis of the social movements increased. Unemployment contributed greatly to this. At this time the party became increasingly institutionalised and many party deputies were elected into parliament, and governors at the state level. This changed the way of thinking in the party. The party became more concerned with public policies. This led to the development of many original public policies: education, health, transportation and so on. The most important thing has been ensuring popular participation in all of this.

It is clear to PT that it has to work with the idea of representative democracy and direct democracy. There are some very important experiences in direct democracy. In big and small cities budgeting happens through what we call participatory budgeting. In the current period there are new social movements,

with the most important being the MST. Relations between MST and PT are very close. But we are very different forces in society. The common challenge confronting all social movements is the recession, which is directly linked to the wider economic crisis in the country. In Brazil there are also right-wing movements that converge around charismatic personalities.

The Workers Party (PT) is committed to socialism but this has not been defined too rigidly. This has allowed different tendencies to define and shape the perspective of the organisation. How does this work in practice without tearing the organisation apart?

PT has always had many tendencies but in the beginning these were well defined. 'Articulation' is a tendency, which attempts to get the various tendencies together. There has been a dynamic in the party that has allowed this to happen. We still don't have a specific ideological tendency like Maoism or Trotskyism. There are also some tendencies that have an ideological expression and they consider PT a strategic party. There are some other groups that have an interest in PT. They consider PT a front and the true revolutionary party is actually themselves. The existence of tendencies has been important to guarantee the inner democracy of the party. Today there are problems with this and it has to be rethought. It doesn't mean we are going to eliminate these tendencies. However, those members of the party who do not have a tendency have difficulties working in the party. It is difficult to influence the direction of the party and hence many people have a tentative relationship with the party. This makes it difficult to make the party a mass party. The party gets millions of votes in the elections and there are millions who consider themselves sympathisers of the party, but very few people actively participate in the life of the party; less than 200 000. There is a Congress in 1999 where we are going to discuss this situation.

How does theoretical production happen in PT? Do you have a theoretical journal or organ that gives a broad ideological coherence to PT?

We have a journal, which has been around for about ten years. It contains many of the ideas of PT. Anybody can participate in writing and contributing. There was a committee that co-ordinated this but now we have a foundation. This foundation is linked to PT but it is also separate from PT. This foundation works with the intellectual production in the party. There is also a secretary for political education. However, since we disengaged from the communist experience we

do not know where we are going. It seems as though we are lost. This is a personal opinion.

What is PT's perspective on engaging the middle class and local capital vis-à-vis the objective of achieving socialism and development?

PT is rooted amongst the industrial proletariat. This is similar to the social democratic parties at the beginning of the twentieth century. PT also has a strong presence amongst the peasantry - small and medium-sized farmers and agricultural workers. Amongst the middle class PT is very strong within the intellectual layer based at universities and professionals like doctors and lawyers. PT has a weak presence amongst businessmen. There is an association of businessmen who sympathise with PT. These businessmen do not contribute significantly to the Gross Domestic Product of the Brazilian economy. The national bourgeoisie is now really suffering because of international capital. It is also a cowardly bourgeoisie. Their options almost never move beyond their interests or capital in general.

The question of the bourgeoisie is big and the party needs a project that would attract them to win elections. This project must look to the businessmen but this must not be in the classical way of forming an alliance between the national bourgeoisie and the workers. Our project must in the end problematise the challenges and problems of globalisation.

What are your lessons from municipal and provincial government for advancing socialism?

The municipal experiences are richer and more generalisable. There are two main issues that dominate the politics of PT: popular participation and a change in priorities. The change of priorities means a local welfare state, which in Brazil means a lot. This means policies for education, health and transportation. There are also experiences regarding a basic income grant, even if you earn a salary. This has occurred to guarantee family support for children so that they can continue being educated rather than being in the streets or working. In this case the change of priorities looks like a social democratic policy. However, the mechanism of popular participation like participatory budgeting has also been used. Where popular participation and a change in priorities have been used together in local governments this has been extremely successful for PT. There is a city in northeast Brazil in which PT has been in power for 16 years. It has

been chosen as an example by UNESCO of successful delivery of education and health care. The budget is displayed for everybody on the front door of the city hall. It is a small city. Six years ago PT was also in power in Sao Paulo. The problems were very big. Probably we will win the elections in two years' time. When we were in power we were successful from an administrative point of view, but not politically.

Porto Alegre is an interesting case in which PT has been succeeding. The social policies have been successful and the party is deeply rooted and legitimate amongst the people. It's very normal to hear people say in Porto Alegre that they would vote and PT would deliver. This is exceptional for Brazilian politics because there is a tradition of voting for individuals and not for parties. This is why the government in Porto Alegre has been in place for ten years and now we have the state government. This is an important state. We are also in power in two other states. The one state is a laboratory of environmental politics and it is where Chico Mendes, the rubber tapper, was murdered. From a political and administrative point of view we have been unsuccessful in the state of Espirito Santo. We have also been in power in Brazilia, where the capital is, and we have had a very successful social administration.

In all the attempts PT has made to win the presidential elections, it has not been successful. Why has this happened?

Churchill had an answer: the other candidate got more votes. The historical surprise is that the election has been between left and right, whereas before PT it was between the right wing itself. The second point is that the bourgeoisie gave their votes to someone who does not have much experience and in 1994 and 1998 they had a strong coalition amongst parties. It was analogous to the Republicans and Democrats in the US supporting one candidate. The media also played a role in all of this.

Would you characterise Cardoso, the current President of Brazil, as a centre leftist? Is he like Thabo Mbeki in South Africa?

Give us Thabo Mbeki any day. They are not the same. Cardoso is the man of neo-liberalism. He preferred an alliance with the economic and political right. He is more like the previous racist South African president, Botha. On the outside he displays centre-left ideas but he applies neo-liberal ideas. He has business politics and it has grave consequences for the country. There used to be a

national development project in the country, even with the military and the national bourgeoisie. Now, the tendency is to internationalise the country and to undermine and destroy national industry. Hence, no comparisons can be made.

Are racism and sexism prevalent in Brazilian society and do they manifest in PT?

Brazilian society is very racist. Its racism is different from South Africa's. In your country you had institutionalised racism, but in Brazil racism is punishable by law but the society still practices it. It is linked to the social condition of black people in Brazil. We have been the last country in the whole of America to end slavery. This process spawned a movement, which became conservative. Since the end of slavery black people have not seriously improved their material situation. All indicators suggest white people are better off than black people. Things have changed in people's minds, since slavery. Material progress has been minimal. Public outbursts against racism are rare and do provoke scandals. When it happens it appears a lot in the media.

Brazil has the second-largest black population in the world after Nigeria. But the black movements are not strong in Brazil. The fight against racism has some importance now but there is no real organised movement that is strong and big. There is a similar predicament confronting women. In the last 20 years the question of discrimination against women has gained in importance. These problems will be solved with affirmative action driven by the left parties. This is a programmatic commitment of PT.

PT is a party open to all and we have more black people and women in PT than any other party in Brazil.

What is PT's view on the left in the world and how is it relating to the left within the present global situation?

In 1990 PT convened a meeting of leftist parties in Sao Paulo. There have been eight meetings since then. About 100 parties from all over the Americas are involved. It is mixed and some parties are more important than others. We have FARC from Columbia, Sandinistas from Nicaragua and so on. We have very good relations with the socialist and communist parties in Europe. We are not part of the Socialist International (SI) but we go to the meetings. We do not consider the SI to be important. There are also relations with the Palestinians, the

ANC and generally we are very active abroad.

If you were to achieve a democratic breakthrough, do you think imperialism and the military would allow you to implement your program of socialism?

Presently the military is not the main issue in Brazil. Instead it is the global situation that concerns us the most. A leftist government will suffer at the hands of national capital and imperialism. It would be necessary to have very strong international alliances. This politics would require a block in Latin America, to create a common market. We also have to exploit the contradictions between the US and Western Europe. We also have to rely on five countries in the world to counterbalance the West: China, India, South Africa, Russia and Brazil. Maybe South Africa and Brazil would have a strong alliance to solve the problem in Angola and to have an effect on the South regarding democracy. Also to link South Africa to MERCUSOR. We need to keep in mind what Brazil can share with the world. It is not Guatemala in 1954 or Chile in 1973.

In the light of how PT has been evolving, what is your perspective on the future for socialism in the 21st century?

I will try and quote from Mario Pedrosa, a former Trotskyist who, together with Lula, founded the PT:

'PT is just a Workers' Party. It's the only one with structures and tendencies and finality. It is a mass party, with no vanguard, no theories, and no sacred book. It is what it is. It guides itself by its practice. It follows its own instinct. It makes mistakes. There is no dogma. Auto-critique is important. When we enter PT we leave our prejudices at the door and our extra tendencies which possibly moved us there ...'

This represents a bit of PT and also a bit of what socialism is.

Also, look to our resolutions. There is a document titled: *PT's Socialism*.

The Veins of Latin America

If the pen is mightier than the M16
And poetic fury more profound than
Bourgeois propaganda, let it be known :

The deep veins of Latin America
Have been uprooted
Excavated by the elite
Protecting a post-card existence
Defending a soap opera world
Ripping, gauging, lacerating, tearing and butchering

Basic implements
Death squads, pistoleros, rebels, assassinations,
Massacres ... an unending archive of cruelty
Unleashed against the bright and brave cream
Che
Fonseca ...
Flooding the continent with their blood

Without a flinch of hesitation
Stopping even the march
Of democratic change in its tracks
Arbenz (1954)
Allende (1973) ...
Building a bulwark

A soup of alphabetic horrors
Authoritarianism
Junta
Military rule
National security ...
To stop the nightmare Reds

The stench of blood is everywhere
Even when the centuries curtains are closing
Revolutionary blood refuses to dry

Conscience invites you back into the past
Come generals, oligarchs, the White House...
Confront the dialectic of your heinous greed
Listen to the voices of the orphaned, widowed, favelas, shanty towns,
maquiladores ...
without danger they want to laugh
without risk they want to live
without fear they want to dance

You ignore this at your own peril.

CHAPTER THREE

James Petras

Marxist Sociologist and Popular Educator

What have been the major influences on your life that have contributed to your commitment to socialist politics?

Well, one can say there was a cultural rebellion against the conformity of McCarthyism in the United States in the mid 1950s. I began to read cultural criticism, etc. I lived in an industrial area on the East Coast near Boston. It was a big union town, but I was not in the union. Subsequently I went to California for graduate studies in 1958 and it was the Cuban Revolution that radicalised me. In 1958-59 I became involved in the defense of the Cuban Revolution and also became very active in the civil rights movement and in the 1960s in the Berkeley student movement as a student leader. I then became involved in the Vietnam War protest and then against the US invasion of the Dominican Republic.

This was one part of the story of my involvement in socialist politics. The other part relates to my involvement in Latin America. I met leftist Latin American students and a professor in California. I went to Chile in 1965-66 and met many exiles from Brazil and all over Latin America. It was in Chile that I developed a more coherent intellectual perspective and became active as a student with the leftwing of the Socialist Party (Allende's Party) as well as with a new extra-parliamentary group called the Movement of the Revolutionary Left.

Those are the original influences. I read Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg and drew from that tradition rather than the Stalinist tradition. I was very critical of the Stalinist tradition, though I never believed these societies were capitalist or, as some people described, reactionary societies. I saw them as contradictory societies in which we needed to separate social progress from politically repressive regimes.

So in this period (the mid 1960s) I developed ties with various leftist groups in my visits to Latin America and all over the continent. I worked with them in many capacities, writing, speaking and engaging in debates and dialogues for many years. For over 30 years I have been collaborating at different times with different groups. Now I work with the Landless People's Movement in Brazil. I have collaborated with the Zapatistas through their conference in Chiapas and in

Argentina and Chile with the Communist Parties. I collaborate with various leftist journals in Latin America and publish books and articles there. My primary work is now in Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. I have done some work on the United States. I published a book, which reinterprets imperialism in the late 20th century. So I do engage in politics here, though living here in the States is really very difficult. It is like Siberia (even the weather). We have the freedom to work, but most of my politics is a long distance away.

A lot of your theoretical work has dealt with imperialism, narrowly defined as the role of the USA. Do you think in the post-Cold War era the concept of imperialism still has analytical currency?

I think it is extremely important. The biggest intellectual problem is the state of science around the concept of globalisation. This is a great obfuscation on the nature of the organisation of international economy, of relationships between imperialist countries and other countries in the world. In fact, imperialism as a concept is more useful today than at any other time, because you do not have any of the political constraints that limit the scope and depth of imperialism in the past. I mean the Non-aligned Movement, the radical regimes, the former Soviet Union, etc. Imperialism is more pervasive and more profound and has even greater consequences today. We can see this in the so-called 'global crisis', which is not a global crisis. There is US prosperity in terms of stock markets and never before have US corporations and banks had such fabulous returns as during the 1990s. I am currently doing a study on this by looking at the US in Latin America.

There is tremendous pillage now - in Eastern Europe, in the former USSR, bombings in the Middle East, etc. If we put these facts together we get a better picture. The so-called Asian challenge or the New Pacific Powers, according to some analysts, completely misreads the nature of these Asian regimes as they have their fundamentals clearly tied with US finance, banking, and trade opportunities. Much of this was conditioned by the Cold War and Washington's desire to showcase these countries and provide them with exceptional opportunities, which were not part of a new paradigm. Now we see the collapse of these Asian countries and they are running around begging for their enterprises to be taken over by imperialism. This is similar to the neo-colonial regimes we have witnessed in the past. I am talking about Thailand, South Korea and Taiwan (the so-called tigers which have become pussycats), whose condition today we need to conceptualise and theorise. Most US multi-nationals

control their technologies through the home office and most strategic decisions are made by headquarters in the imperialist countries.

So the idea that there are diverse sources of exploitation is an interesting idea, but the fact is control, accumulation and decision making are all centralised. In crucial dimensions we are dealing with the myth of the global corporation; it is very insidious language invented by business journalists at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. To deal with the spread of multi-nationals they could not resort to imperialism so they used the term 'globalisation'. The business press (e.g. *Business Week*) of the early 1970s talks about globalisation and not about imperialism. They found an echo in the academic world and began to elaborate on the autonomy of the corporation, the anachronism of the state, etc. This was absolutely absurd and had no relation to empirical realities. For instance, all trade agreements, bailouts, subsidies, and promotion of corporations come from the nation state or the imperial state.

You can cite many, many, examples from the bailout of Russia to the bailouts in Asia. All go through the IMF, which was put together by the US state together with other imperial states. All the ideas espoused are basic components of globalisation theory, but these ideas are disproven by empirical studies. I think in that sense the failure of the left, as reflected in the theoretical and conceptual collapse into the language of business journalism and its academic refinements, is appalling. The left talks about a crisis within the old paradigm. It is really a theoretical abdication to look at what are in fact real structures of corporations, of how they function and how they relate to the state. This is appalling from the point of view of academic rigour and disastrous in terms of its political derivatives and consequences.

What form has imperialism assumed in the present?

This is an issue we can discuss in great detail. First and fundamentally, we must look at economic relationships. Imperialism today is reflected in the capacity to impose micro-economic agendas on countries. To open them up to unrestricted exploitation with various dimensions. These include: interest payments, profits, royalty payments, licensing agreements, as well as extracting beneficial trade exchanges and imposing trade patterns that revert to a kind of monoculture specialisation. These elements work at the micro level as they have the capacity to reshape micro-economic agendas. This is where the particular issues of imperialism are, because they extract payments and force countries into conditionality.

This is a very limited dimension. If we look at the debt issue in a larger matrix we see that what it became was simply the opening wedge. The debt issue was leveraged into breaking down all the pre-existing constraints on capital. In other words, imperialism was willing to sacrifice or renegotiate immediate interest payments in exchange for a privatisation agenda, which gave them access not to the teat of the cow but the cow itself. They were no longer just getting milk, the debt out of the nipples; they got the whole cow.

Secondly, they got deregulation of financial markets. There was a tremendous capacity not only to get access to local savings and banking institutions, but also the whole process of portfolio investments was eased as well as the free remittance of profits, which is a crucial issue. This enables them, through the so-called communications and information revolution, to touch a button and trillions of dollars circulate. Is this some kind of new-phase imperialism? None of which would function unless you had a prior change in the macro-economy around the whole deregulation and liberalisation of the whole financial system, which is all premised on politics! A political decision is not something that comes from the world capitalist system. It is not some blind imperative of some new phase of globalisation. It is a very specific policy change related to the change in composition of state-to-state and class relationships that precipitated the breaking down of barriers, which permitted these movements of capital to come in, facilitated by the so-called information revolution.

So when people talk about the technological or second or third scientific revolutions as the driving force it is rubbish! We can envision the same communications and information system functioning perfectly well in a protected economy, in a limited open economy, in state planning and national property, etc. It is compatible with all sorts of planning instruments. Multinational corporations plan multi-billion-dollar investments around the globe; it is central planning and decentralised implementation. They engage in the command economy. Nobody questions the efficiency of allocations and no one talks about the million decisions being made; hundreds of millions of pieces of information curtailing the capacity to plan! These are really smokescreens in numerous sectors of the left, the illiterate left who claim to be beyond Marxism, post-Marxist, but are themselves ignorant of the real ways in which this process has come into being.

The fundamental issue that underlies all of this was the victories in the class struggle. If we do not understand this then we do not understand where we are

today. We have to go back and look at imperialism as a historical phenomenon, beginning with major triumphs. For example, Indonesia in 1965 and Brazil in 1964 are two key countries and located in key regions; subsequently, the reversion in China in 1978 and, of course, the coups in Latin America; the victory of Thatcherism and then the gradual erosion of the welfare state beginning with Carter.

These events set in motion the political processes within which this whole new phase of imperialism took hold and within which the rest of the anti-capitalist world began to unravel. This has become theorised as something inevitable, because it is everywhere powerful. But the social relations and struggles, which precipitated this change in the relationship of forces, is overlooked. Instead we get some vacuous phrases about this 3rd scientific revolution and rationality when the free market grew under the guns of imperialism.

Do you think internal political conditions within the USA have contributed to its role in Latin America and what do you think those conditions are today?

I think we can speak not only about Latin America but the new impetus to expansion. The internal conditions are essential. The US has the least constraints on capital. It is the country in which labour regulations dealing with hiring and firing (and forced mobility of labour) are weak; where there is no public health expenditure for a national health plan; where there is variable and limited pension provision based on enterprise contracts. There are a whole series of regressive taxes in the United States and there are vast areas where there are virtually no unions. Less than 5% of labor is organised.

First, all of these factors facilitate the accumulation of capital and its export. It was the facilitated movements of capital without constraints that allowed US capitalists to relocate to any place at any time under conditions favourable to themselves. This is at one level. Secondly, the fact that for many years and probably even today, US trade unions collaborated in setting up yellow unions. They facilitated the entry of corporations and low wages, of course. Then it boomeranged as many of the conditions favorable overseas (e.g. differential wages) led them to abandon the US and reduce the number of trade unions.

These factors are important. These are crucial factors that, for example, put constraints on German capital as it was very difficult for them to relocate or Japanese capital could not fire workers with ease. In Spain it is costly to fire

workers; with legal provisions providing for one or two months' salary for each year of work. A worker with 30 years gets 60 or 70 months' salary. This is an enormous crunch and does not allow capitalism to be as mobile or, as they say, dynamic and flexible. These are internal conditions at the level of the workplace. Secondly, the US is the only country that lacks a social democratic party. That is, there are two liberal rightwing parties in the United States, and no constraints in terms of social budgeting and taxation in the sense that you have in Europe.

Do you think the failure of the radical intelligentsia also contributes to this, to inhibiting the emergence of a third party?

There are two problems. If there is a progressive intelligentsia it is isolated from the working class because of the patrimonial structure that exists in unions. You do not have a trade union bureaucracy in this country. You have a patrimonial organisation in which the union officials appoint, on the basis of personal loyalties, the staff and organisation of the union. You do not have a bureaucracy in the sense that officials are appointed because of their merits or skills. You have a patrimonial structure just like in feudalism and these union fiefdoms have salaries that compete with those of CEOs. You have city unions in New York with leaders getting \$300 000 per annum plus perks. The head of a 120 000-strong city union has his officials appointed by his finger. This kind of structure makes it extremely difficult for the minority of progressives to work within such a political social milieu.

Secondly, there has been a radical transformation of the radical intelligentsia from the late 1960s and early 1970s to now in which there has been a professionalisation of radicalism, the institutionalisation of it. Radicalism is the exact replica of the conventional academics, only they treat some radical themes or adapt Marxist methodology, but they are also divorced from any ongoing political commitments, whether here or elsewhere, through solidarity work. So if you go to the professional meetings, you see people presenting themes on any subject (the Brazilian left, the South African left) but they are completely inconsequential. They are items for their Curriculum Vitae! They become vehicles for social promotion; you can even get Marxists becoming presidents of associations and intergrate into the foundations' circuits, because they are not inserted in any conflictual context.

This is the second element here that inhibits this process. Now we do have a minority, a very small minority of people who have found ways to connect up

either here or abroad.

Can we get back to the relationship between imperialism and globalization? Also where does the concept of 'crisis' fit into all of this?

First, I object to the use of the word globalisation, because, for example, if you talk about international transactions between Europe and the United States, we are talking about one type of international exchange that could be called globalisation. A relationship between the Dominican Republic and Cuba could also entail an international transaction. This is not imperialism, it is an exchange. Then we are talking about the US dictating economic policy in South East Asia and the rest of Latin America, and Europe intervening in Africa, etc. These are qualitatively different relationships and we have to make this distinction.

Secondly, I think that the movement overseas of capitalism is not simply a response to crisis, but a conscious response to the opening up based on conditions favourable to achieving different rates of profit. Let me say this: if there was simply a crisis why did imperialism move with greater velocity and quantity in the late 1970s into Latin America than in the early 1970s? The crisis was 1973, but the movements of capital were precipitated by fundamental change of political and social structures within Latin America (namely, a series of coups). So you must not just look at the structural conditions of imperialism. You certainly had that, but you had also a remarkable shift in power within the potentially targeted countries. Moreover, you had the breakdown of internal barriers in the United States - the movement of capital, which I mentioned earlier, the weakening of trade unions, etc. - that facilitated this process of mobility. So these are not simply economic phenomena. Imperialism is political. Thirdly, there was a state which increasingly assumed responsibilities for creating the shell within which imperial capital moves.

I mean the idea of globalisation implies somehow autonomous capitalist movements. It does not tell us why capital moves at a certain time, at a certain rhythm and to a certain place. Who creates the universe in which capitalism functions? It is through the state, and I think this is crucial to understand.

So, we have put a number of variables into this matrix. I think we also have to look at particular sectors that were particularly affected by declining rates of profits. I think the principal sector that was affected in the early 1970s was

finance capital. First of all, there were declining rates of profits in the United States, the saturation of lending, and economic decline. Secondly, there was the excess liquidity from recycling oil money back into the US. With this abundance of dollars they had to pay interest and therefore had to lend out, which led to tremendous expansion. Thirdly, there was a class constraint that also motivated the US. In other words, there was a need to lower wage levels in the United States. One way to do this was to tap into the world reserve of labour by relocating, beginning with automobiles in Mexico and so on, to lower the wage and bargaining position of labour in the United States. Imperialism was a way of expanding what had become saturated. Prior to this they drew on blacks in the South and brought them to Detroit in the 1930s and 1940s. That reserve army was drying up and therefore wages had a tendency to climb at 5-6 % a year in real terms. So moving abroad escaped a kind of profit squeeze. I think we can exaggerate the so-called profit squeeze. There is a lot of debate on how severe the profit squeeze was and there is contradictory data on it. I think we need to look at particular sectors in relationship to the whole surplus issue.

The lack of surplus labour was a crucial issue. The fact you do not have a surplus labour force and yet wages are not expanding quite rapidly now is because there are no unions that can exploit the scarcity of labour to extract wage concessions. We have to put this theory of globalisation as a response to capitalist crisis in context, because the fastest expansion of capitalism is precisely when it has an upturn. Now the argument is that there is some underlying stagnation in capitalism. So you have these periods of expansion and contraction, but the underlying theme is of capitalist stagnation. This is almost a metaphysical concept. When capitalism expands it is temporary and is going to revert to stagnation. When it is down, well, it is really expressing its inner essence. This is an interesting argument. I think the only problem is it is difficult to refute it or to prove it in empirical terms except by taking a 50 or 100 year cycle and trying to map it out so that it fits your preconceptions. But I think the real issue is that capitalism expands within the United States and it expands overseas. And the logic behind this is that exploitation internally fuels expansion overseas.

One of the critical aspects in all of this is the fact that we have had profits in the manufacturing sector at a disadvantage to the profits in the speculative sector. So, you are getting a tremendous inversion of investment today. The net value of a firm and its earnings is completely irrelevant to the investments in the stock markets. Today the relationship between stock growth and earnings of an enterprise is totally irrational. The value of stocks is far beyond any earning

capacities. So we are entering into a phase that began earlier on, the transfer of profits from manufacturing into speculative activities, and then some little investments seeping back, but the majority are multiplying in this area.

So the real crisis I see today is twofold. The first crisis is this tremendous speculative bubble that is going to burst. I think 1999 was dangerous, living on the edge. Secondly, there is an overproduction crisis (e.g. in Japan and many other countries). The constraints that have been imposed limit incomes and social spending. So you are going to get overproduction at a time of constraints on consumption. This is also going to contribute to a crisis in the productive sector. So you have the two hypotheses of financial crisis and of production crisis, leading to a severe recession. And this is where I think we are heading.

Imperialism has attempted to constantly crush the revolutionary breakthroughs in Latin America. Cuba has experienced all forms of US aggression, but in particular there has been a blockade imposed against Cuba for the past 30 years. Also in Nicaragua the Contras were used in a bloody civil war as an instrument of American foreign policy against the Nicaraguan government. There are two parts to this question. Notwithstanding the impact of imperialism on Cuba, what is the future of the Cuban Revolution? The second question is: do you think the Nicaraguan revolution has come to an end?

I think Cuba is at the crossroads, in the sense that it has a revolutionary heritage, which includes not only public property and social programmes; it also has a reservoir of nationalist and anti-imperialist consciousness, to a much lesser degree, I would say, of socialist consciousness. The socialism is mixed in with its national defence of the nation, defense of its autonomy and independence. Now, this is one element in the picture.

The second element is the attempt by the Cubans to survive economically by opening the country to foreign investment, to dollarisation and to other so-called economic reforms or the restoration of capitalism. Now I think one can discuss the economic strategy, particularly tourism and the degree to which tourism has become the centre piece of economic recovery. I personally think the Cubans have gone too far in this direction with tourism. Their alternative development, which could have taken advantage of their comparative advantage of a highly skilled and educated labour force, would allow them to begin to develop alternative economic exports and a more diverse economic structure.

Nevertheless, things being what they are, the crucial element in Cuba today has to be seen in very important political and social change. In this regard the US is pushing for political and social liberalisation to open opportunities for the emerging bourgeois within the state sector to work with the multinationals. They would like to see a multi-party situation which would be a lever to transform Cuba into the new Russia.

Against this backdrop, what has to be seen as important in Cuba is the democratisation of mass organizations. Allowing the mass of workers, who are now increasingly working for capitalists, that is, increasingly employed as workers in corporations, to develop their own class-conscious policies. You see, it is one thing to accept state tutelage when the surplus generated by workers is reinvested back into the social sphere. It's another thing to be under state tutelage when capitalists expropriate the surplus. This is a fundamental change; it requires a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between the independent trade unions versus the tutored trade unions.

Under conditions of increasing privatisation you have to have increasing class autonomy that can engage in two struggles: one against the emerging capitalist classes and the second against the emerging privatising vision of the Cuban associates in the foreign enterprises. Inevitably the people who deal with multinational corporations are going to develop a capitalist mentality. This goes without saying, no matter what their communist background, credentials or exhortations are, structurally their salaries, perks and interactions are going to give them a capitalist worldview. Against that we have to see how the workers can defend and consolidate what remains of socialism, and continue the process of struggle. I am not saying it is going to be easy. Cuba's mass organisations need to turn into class organisations of struggle, where class struggle ideology is developed once again, under these new circumstances.

This, I think, would be the best way the masses can defend their interests and the revolutionary achievements, against the new wave of Cuban yuppies and others who will rationalise each of these reforms at the top in terms of future benefits for the masses, which will never come forth.

The second part of the question: do you think the Nicaraguan revolution has come to an end?

I think it is dead! Dead and buried with several others. Under Ortega workers

and protesters have been repressed in defence of a capitalist regime. Ortega is one of the richest people in Nicaragua along with many of his ex-commandante colleagues, who blow empty rhetoric. I think there is a certain transformation at the top.

The other phenomenon is at the bottom. The masses are still active socially and politically. They find their political vehicles still to be Sandinista mass organisations. So, we have a two-tier reality which Ortega tries to bridge between his comrade elite leaders and the squalor, misery and militancy of the mass base of the Sandinista party. So he compensates with critical rhetoric and working deals with rightwing male liberals. This means what remains, if anything remains, of the Sandinista revolution is not in institutional form, because it has been eroded with privatisation, liberalisation of the economy, rising illiteracy rates, the spread of infectious diseases, and the dismantling of public health sectors. What remains is a kind of reflexive, rebelliousness among the masses, which went through the social transformations and experienced, at least temporarily, improvements in their life and went through grassroots solidarity which still exists at the community level, in particular co-ops and farms, etc.

One has to draw lessons about the nature of multi-class formations, like the Sandinistas, which had a socialising rhetoric, but included sectors of the land-holding elite and business groups who they saw as jointly building and reconstructing a progressive Nicaragua. This was a very temporary political coming together, which then created the economic base from which you had the launching of the counter-revolution. The US and other countries backed from within these big property groups. These groups were retained in the so-called mixed economy to help in the construction, but this was actually the deconstruction of socialism. The bourgeoisie took the incentives - taxes, subsidies etc but continued to build bridges towards imperialism.

So, how should the left deal with alliances, given the twin challenges of transformation and the need to develop the forces of production in the periphery?

Who is hegemonic is key in any coalition or alliance. We have seen many situations where the bourgeoisie is in crisis but they put communists or socialists into labour ministries to pacify the workers and give them token power, while they manage the ministries of defence, interior and finances. Once they get over

the crisis, they kick the communists and socialists out and proceed to consolidate bourgeois power.

So the question is whether you can put together a coalition that does not dilute class hegemony, and I mean class hegemony not labels. This is the first issue: if the bourgeoisie insists on having the crucial ministries, if the organisations are undemocratic, or if they speak in the name of workers (e.g. 'We have worker hegemony'), and then collaborate in building a capitalist economy, then this is not worker hegemony. Simply because a group labels itself a workers' organisation does not mean it works in their interests.

Second, looking at the economy is fine, but we are not dealing with a homogenous economy. There are pre-capitalist relations, petty commodity producers, vast retail networks, an informal sector that cannot be transformed overnight, and certain areas of high technology that are very difficult to run in a non-private way because they lack personnel or for whatever immediate requirements. Nevertheless, it is important that the strategic commanding heights of the economy by which I mean foreign trade, banking and the decisive sectors of the economy (i.e. industry, mining, energy) are controlled by the people, through socialization, because we need to increase social accountability. We know of many cases where public enterprises become areas of enrichment and subsequently the public officials become private capitalists. So public ownership becomes an escalator to private capitalism. Thus, we need socialised sectors. We also need to encourage and support small-scale producers because they absorb labour. You cannot micro-manage retail trade, bakeries, restaurants, etc. For example, you can build cafeterias in factories. Or you can have certain forms of collective food distribution in impoverished areas (e.g. soup kitchens, collective cooking, etc.). I have seen them function. Nevertheless I think the whole area of services and retail and small-scale production is going to be in private or co-operative forms of activity.

The decisive question is what you do with middle-level factories (e.g. enterprises of 25 or more workers). Now, China has developed in the countryside collectives, which is the fastest growing sector, contrary to bourgeois theorists who argue that it is the private sector that is booming. It is really the collective sector that is fastest growing. Now this collective sector functions in terms of the market. They produce for the market, they contract, sub-contract and so on. While they have low wages, there is accountability and a high social wage. For example, workers get \$30 a month, but have all their

meals, clothes, television at cheap prices and a free apartment. This is part of their membership in the enterprise.

This is one successful experiment of combining collective ownership with becoming competitive and producing for the market. It is in a country that has expanding opportunities and low wages, but yet the social wage is very steep. Now, this is one possibility and it is one that has not been forced on the people. The communities in China have voted for it. One problem, however, is that many of these collectives also employ workers. That is, the beneficiaries in terms of social wage are mostly the permanent people of the collective. The temporary or outside workers hired get a wage. The wage may even be higher than the nominal wage of the permanent people that live there, but they get none of the social benefits. So there is a two-tiered labour system here. Some would argue that there is a collective capitalist against the workers. I wanted to point out this criticism, because some people will make this criticism as if we did not already understand it. Nevertheless this has been the lifesaver of the Chinese experience both in terms of growth, but most importantly, in terms of absorbing the millions of people who have been discharged from their communes. Without this China would have catastrophic social problems and probably even face major upheavals.

So, the collectives have been labour intensive and have a social agenda. It retains ties to the past. Most of the people still have Maoist conceptions even though they consume and trade in the market. This is the only exception, I would say, that exists in China of something resembling market socialism. It is an example in which market activity is subordinated to the social agenda. This is not taking place in most of the coastal enterprises and the free trade zones. But these are possibilities. The other possibility is, of course, a private sector of medium-sized enterprises with government inspectors for labour conditions and social enforcement of regulations on health, minimum wages, etc. Without multiplying bureaucracies, there can be community regulations and norms with clearly delineated rules of the game that allow a profit to be made, but require a certain amount of contribution to social improvements in the community. The community produces the workers, the skills, the nutrition to make workers healthy, and therefore companies have a responsibility to help provide certain social benefits to the community.

So then the question is how to articulate these different levels, which I think requires the push and pull of a real democracy, not a multiparty democracy.

These diverse interests will be pulling in different directions. The private middle bourgeoisie will want to extend; as they make money they will want to invest it now ('We make profits and we want to become bigger but you have put the cap on how big we can get. Then we'll just spend the money and cause inflation.'). So we need to be able to articulate these activities in a way that encourages diverse private activities without allowing it to become the dominant mode. The workers in the state sector, the unionised popular sector and co-operatives should align with each other and put the emphasis on more subsidies for co-operatives or new investment and new technology for the state sectors.

So, you are going to get the clash of socialist pluralism, not capitalist pluralism. With capital coming into a country you can give them a contract that guarantees profit but then there is a fade out formula. This means while they control the management, technology and ownership - command the strategic areas they have to set up, train people and even draw on local management. Through a fade out formula the presence of external capital is time bound; they are not permanent. Sometimes companies do not want to just sell their technology. Then you have to shop around to find out what is available, how much you can bargain, etc. But these are areas in the short run that are crucial, areas in which you may not have capacity. The other thing is what I call the learning curve, which is sending people to study abroad and to come back with technical expertise.

For example, after World War II, the Japanese sent all their students to study in the United States where they rented technology, studied it, modified it, re-engineered it, etc. Another example is oil exploitation, because oil exploitation equipment is difficult, complex and costly. So you bring in a mining or oil company because you do not have the technical know-how to make this machinery or run it. You contract them or do a joint venture with majority control and possibly a fade-out formula. But you do not hand over the strategic areas and say it is developing the productive forces. It is not true to say that if we develop the productive forces this creates a working class and then in an unforeseen future we will have socialism. When you build capitalism now, you have capitalism later. You do not turn capitalism now into socialism later. This is a phony theory.

In the first stages of the Russian revolution, the Russians never expected to expropriate factories. But it was very difficult. So, they had 'Commissars', which was not a bad term, and they had worker control where workers oversaw factory

owners and foremen. These workers were accountable to the Soviets. Well the capitalists did not want this. So the white armies intervened. The capitalists asked why they should help build socialism and so they pulled out, they abandoned them. The Russians were forced to nationalise because the capitalists abandoned their productive function. So they began nationalising and then ultra-leftist said they were building communism immediately. The Russians nationalised out of necessity. The bourgeoisie asked why they should be a tool of a socialist when the writing was on the wall for them. They knew that they would be there for five years and then would be gone. So they said they have the white armies and 21 countries invading Russia. They were sure they would win! So fuck them! They created counter-revolution and chaos.

This is one of the critical questions, which in Cuba and Nicaragua to some degree was not handled properly. For example, when you have engineers, competent technicians, and doctors who are willing to stay there for whatever reasons (e.g. feelings of national identity, families and communities are there, etc.), but they do not want to be communists. They do not want to attend study groups, etc. then you should leave them alone. Do not try to force people to engage in active political collaboration if they are cooperating economically. And do not try to reduce their salaries in the sense of eliminating inequality. Tolerate them and understand that it is bad to have inequality, but if you lose them then you will have a bigger problem and will have to import foreigners at twice the wages.

So these are questions and issues which are very contradictory. You must tolerate inequalities and apolitical people, when it is necessary to build up the productive capacity. Hopefully in the future you will have the capacity. These problems require careful analysis.

The resurgence of the left in Latin America relates to a new wave of peasants' struggles. There are two parts to this. Why is this happening? And can you give us some insight into the peasant movements and the role they are playing?

I wrote this long article on the resurgence of peasant movements, which went against the grain for many writers. One person did a demographic study of peasants disappearing. He said peasants are only 35% of the population and therefore they have no future, because once they are fewer than 50% they have no future. It was one of those very silly statistical extrapolations put into politics. There are various factors that assist with explaining why the upsurge amongst

the peasantry in Latin America. One is structural, that is, the tremendous transformation of surplus from the agrarian sectors to fuel industrial and speculative real estate capital development. Many landowners took their money and reinvested it in urban real estate and finance overseas. So there was a decapitalisation of the countryside. Secondly, there was a tremendous push by governments to stimulate export agriculture. This in turn led to the rationalisation of agriculture and the loss of land by tenants. Thirdly, there was inflation which stimulated urban investors to buy land as a hedge and, therefore, also dismantle productive areas. So, the burden of the economic crisis or expansion was heavily put not only on urban workers but also on the rural sector. In addition, free trade policies led to massive imports that impoverished small, petty commodity producers. So these are all structural factors that contributed to the upsurge.

Then there are other social, political, ideological and organizational factors. First, an important factor here was the expansion of education in the countryside. That is, with the economic situation you had growth of literacy and a growing movement of urban to rural and rural to urban. This broke down the isolation of peasants from the old traditional estates (e.g. plantations). There was a great deal of growth through this broader social interaction.

Second, in Latin America there was also the growth of liberation theology that extended itself as a conscious organising tool, not revolutionary consciousness, but in self-improvement, co-operatives, social aid, and social solidarity. This became the springboard for collective action, and this collective action in turn encouraged a growth of Marxism and radical peasant doctrines or ideas. This led to a fusion of a non-sectarian Marxism with the social consciousness of Christianity which became a dynamic movement that was more inclusive. These are movements rather than peasant parties, because of the heterogeneity in the countryside (e.g. landless workers, migrant workers, petty commodity producers, etc.) and most crucially the increasing proletarianisation of workers in the agricultural labour force. This did not happen completely, but it was a phenomenon that was accentuated.

This developed the third element. So far we have the structural changes and certain types of social and ideological changes. The third level or element was the emergence of movements as opposed to narrow trade unions. Many trade unions in Latin America received subsidies from the state (i.e. Ministry of Labour), which conditioned their capacity to struggle and organise. They still

voice very radical rhetoric, but they are constrained and, more importantly, become institutionalised. Well, the peasant leaders that emerged in Latin America were not part of this process of institutionalisation and hierarchicalisation. This new leadership shared with the membership a close relationship in terms of living standards, running risks and being in close consultation with the membership. I have been to all the offices and peasants walk into the office; I mean everyone is accessible. They go to assemblies to protect and defend their positions. They do not have a big apparatus checking out who is there and throwing them out. It is a much more open situation and these organisations were able to do what the trade union could not do. This is, they could solve problems immediately. People did not have land, so they occupied land. That was the solution. It was not a speech, a strike, a petition in congress for legislation. They organise, occupy, resist and then demand expropriation.

They build co-operatives and demonstrate that class struggle has a payoff. This formula of organized problem-solving has a tremendous impact because it demonstrates that struggles can win and that each win can improve living standards. This is the secret of the Landless Workers Movement. This past year 130 000 families were settled through struggles and pressures on government. You can multiply this in different areas with different degrees of success. One of the most crucial issues for the peasant movement was their capacity to retain their autonomy from the Workers Party. They have their own Congresses and vote for their own leadership. They pressure the Workers Party to fight for agrarian reform, but their rhythms of struggle are not conditioned by elections. They are not part of the Workers Party. They are a social and political movement with their own schools, training, ideology, and dynamism. In the elections they support worker candidates, peasant candidates, the Workers Party, the Communist Party or the presidential candidate. They support whoever speaks to their issues. Then when there is a massacre or a conflict they call all the deputies to intervene in these struggles. This is very important. They see the limits of agrarian struggle and are trying to build bridges to the urban slums, which is very, very difficult. They are trying to build ties with the urban movements, which is the next task. Now they have 'Project Brazil', which is a national and political socialist programme.

The debate is whether they should continue building a political, social movement or whether they should form into a distinct party with a more radical agenda than the Workers Party. Or should they continue to expand and deepen

their organization, build more bridges to social movements, and eventually convert this into a political force? So this is the phenomenon. We need to look at the objective, subjective, organisational, and leadership factors that created this kind of dynamism. I am building primarily on the Brazilian experience, which I know better. I know other experiences have not reached this level.

Does this mean there is a shift from parliamentary to extra-parliamentary forms of struggle?

Well, I think it varies. The upsurge of peasant movements is a reaction to the ineffectiveness of the left in parliament. The left elects people, but they are minorities and are unable to carry out changes. Parliaments are talking forums, which is important, but the immediate needs of the people, whether it is land, protecting cocoa farmers, or developing village agriculture, cannot be solved in legislatures or the parliamentary systems where the executive signs or decrees the signing of free trade agreements. This leads to massive imports of US corn, for example, and the peasants go bankrupt. The congressmen denounce it and then go to have drinks with their colleagues. There is a disassociation between the adverse macro policies that have an immediate impact and the long-term perspectives that are embedded in parliamentary politics. The left parliamentarians argue that the more of them voted into office over a period of time then they will form the government and will be able to rectify things. Well, by that time the peasants are either starving or in the cities or overseas. So the extra-parliamentary approach is a pragmatic response to the immediacy of problems, the tremendous onslaught from the right, and the basic needs that the peasants have to solve now. In extra-parliamentary struggle if you do not have a house, then we will occupy a landsite. So there is land without people and people without land. So let us bridge this contradiction.

This is part of it. I do not think it was based on some kind of ideological deduction; the Chinese did extra-parliamentary activity and therefore we are going to do so. What I find, and this is very true in the Philippines where I met a peasant leader from Sumatra, is a whole new phenomenon that is eclectic, pragmatic and profoundly revolutionary at the same time. They see the objective, that is land for the peasants, co-operatives for production, socialism in the future, but at the same time they develop their politics on the basis of experience. If they have a land occupation, they do not say well, in principle we do not deal with parliamentary activity. They go to parliamentarians and ask them to talk to the minister of agriculture and to get this land expropriated and financed for us.

It is a kind of *fait accompli* which then serves as leverage to pressure allies or even the ministry. When they sit in the ministry they can say: 'Look, we have got 10 000 families waiting for you to act'. So it is direct action and direct pressure, and only then negotiations. One thing that is very crucial in Brazil is that President Cardoso said he was going to expropriate land for 50 000 families a year, but wanted the movement to sign an agreement vowing to give up land occupations. He said it will happen through agreements, not through illegal occupations. The movement said they would not put a moratorium on occupations, because they would then lose their bargaining positions. They said Cardoso would not expropriate land for 50 000 families, because he would no longer need to. So they said they will accept his offer to expropriate, but would continue the pressure. So then, of course, he labeled them extremists.

The other thing is that once you stop mobilisation you lose your militancy. Militancy without action becomes sterile. There has to be constant action in order to keep people active. What happens to a militancy that is not active? All right, we have a moratorium, the cadres sit in a bar and drink or they might start a sideline business or whatever. They lose their connections, which were built on their constant organising and engagement. So it is not as if you can turn it on and off like a faucet. You cannot just say to the militancy in six months from now we go back in action. Well, in six months you lose people and not just the rank and file. You lose cadres.

So armed struggle is of the agenda for these new peasant movements.

This issue of armed struggle is a decision now seen by all groups as one tactic. It is not the dominant tactic. The landless workers in Brazil are not into armed struggle; they are into extra-parliamentary mass occupations and if landlord gunmen come into the picture the landless workers will defend themselves. They will not fight the army. They will not fight the military police. If four or five gangsters come in and terrorise the community they may defend themselves. This is no longer the 1960s where armed struggle defined the revolutionary struggle.

What are the prospects of the Zapatistas in Mexico?

Well, the Zapatistas have created in Mexico a tremendous political opening, raising fundamental questions of Indian autonomy, democracy and the free trade issue. So on very important points they have been breaking with party politics in

Mexico. Their military prospects are very limited today; they are surrounded by almost half the Mexican army in and around Chiapas. Their political appeal is still very strong and they can still bring several thousand people to Chiapas to discuss a common programme.

Their weakness is that they have not been able to create a national political movement that can advance challenges outside of Chiapas. Their support is relatively inorganic. They have gone through some self-criticism lately and are trying to work with the centre-left Revolutionary Democratic Party (RDP) instead of just dismissing them as a middle-class reformist group. They see the need now to coordinate with all sorts of different groups who have reform or limited political agendas in order to achieve a political breakthrough that allows them to establish some political independence in their area. I think this is important in terms of their continuing struggle.

They have made a very big contribution and they continue to be an important point of reference for debate on many of the issues facing the mass of Mexican people. They are also operating in a milieu in which the government is crushing the people. The government has just eliminated the subsidy on the tortilla, which is one of the most important elements of poor people's lives. Poor people in Mexico live on tortillas and suddenly the government eliminated the subsidy. In addition, there has been a 20% increase in the price of the most elementary and important food items, which comes on top of wage losses, etc.

So, objectively, Mexico has probably seen the greatest depression of any country in Latin America. This is the objective social reality that the Zapatistas resonate with, but they do not have the organisational bridge to connect their programmes with these increasingly impoverished urban people.

What are the implications of this resurgent left in Latin America for advancing socialism?

One needs to both appreciate the significance of this and relativism of it. The significance is it shows that the important social sectors have taken up the struggle and that the so-called collapse of the Wall and the Soviet Union has not been fatal for peasant movements. It shows that new leadership with new radical ideas have body and soul and they exist and present an alternative to neo-liberalism. These movements attract people and are bringing about sectoral changes contrary to the logic of neo-liberalism.

The scope of activities in the countryside in some countries is quite significant. In Brazil and other countries they are probably more dynamic than trade unions that have lost their importance. These examples raise the important question for the left about whether there is the possibility of change. It also raises the issue that intellectuals need to relocate their work and have before them a challenge to elaborate a theoretical and programmatic alternative for these movements. They cannot keep whining that they have to create an alternative (which is like a broken record, quite tiresome and boring) when the peasants through their practices are creating at least a sectoral programme and strategy. This is the importance of these movements as they offer real living challenges to neo-liberalism. In Columbia at the state level and in Brazil at the national level challenges to neo-liberalism are raised by these movements.

Now what are the limitations? The limitations are that none of the peasant movements have made major breakthroughs as far as building urban alliances are concerned. There are many reasons for this, mostly having to do with limitations in the cities, in the trade unions, the loss of vision and critical thinking amongst intellectuals, etc. So the limitation in the peasant resurgence is that it has not created a national coalition. Secondly, I think the peasant movements need to fashion political economic programmes that encapsulate the whole of society. In Brazil it is advancing in this way. Thirdly, I think these movements have not found a vehicle, or are in the process of creating a vehicle, that looks beyond reforms within the system towards a transformation of the system. This is a long-term struggle from the countryside in terms of building urban alliances in the medium term and in the long run converting rural-urban, working class - peasant, and middle-class alliances into a transformative political movement.

This needs to be contextualised in the uneven process taking place. Brazil is more advanced than Paraguay or Peru and Columbia is more advanced than Mexico, but we should also take account of surprises within the resurgence of the left. The election of Hugo Chavez, with a dissident military following and a radical nationalist-populist programme, reflects the discrediting of the two historically major parties among the mass of the people. There were the traditional party machines, the whole business community, and imperialism, on the one hand, and on the other hand there was Chavez running with a small collection of leftist parties, some rightist parties, and originally an anti-imperialist programme.

I do not have much confidence in these personal leaders who emerge with very radical personal programmes, because we know how they come in as radical and go out with a whimper. It remains to be seen the degree to which Chavez will backtrack from repudiating foreign debt, limiting foreign exploitation of oil, and redistributing wealth, which is in his programme. There are some articles arguing that after he was elected he called for reconciliation to pacify investors and telling them they are welcome to come in, but they have to abide by new rules.

The point I am making is this anti-establishment sentiment and mass frustration can be triggered by a new political force, which was unpredictable three or four years ago. These surprises are part of the disintegration of these societies. They are unanticipated phenomena and we should have our antennae up to see them. You look at the mass of poor people today without any political direction and suddenly out of this comes a social explosion, which suddenly turns into a new political formation. We should be aware that this is very possible and probable in this period.

In relation to this, in the context of the resurgence of the left, several intellectuals but particularly Castaneda from Mexico are arguing for a progressive social democracy. What are your views on this issue?

Basically in his analysis Castaneda has distorted history. He contrasts the guerrillas of the 1960s with the military, as two poles of the 1960s and 1970s. He says that this has now ended and therefore the other option is a centre-left electoral politics. The revolutionary left failed, military regimes failed, now what is viable and pragmatic is a centre left electoral coalition that appeals to business, labour, peasants, and progressives. He argues that we should attempt to modify free-market capitalism, which is ravaging people, and institute social reforms, but understand their limitations.

Now, let me summarise my criticism. First, the polarisation in Latin America was not between guerrillas and military. It was between mass movements (that is popular struggles of which guerillas were one element), but the significant changes, for example in Peru's land reform, were struggled for by progressive military and independent peasant movements. The big struggles in Chile were mass struggles that combined parliamentary and extra-parliamentary. In Argentina there were trade unions that established workers' control in many factories. So there are a variety of extra-parliamentary forms that succeeded in

carrying out changes that he absolutely refuses to see. In other words, there are historical antecedents of alternatives to guerrillas and parliamentarianism.

Secondly, there have been centre-left governments in Latin America: in Peru with Garcia and Cardoso in Brazil. Cardoso actually administered one of the most violent neo-liberal programmes. Which social democrats is he talking about? The corrupt ones? The ones converting to neo-liberalism? Or the failed ones?

Let's look at the failed ones, let's say the others are not real social democrats even though they were members of the Social Democrats International. Let's look at one that did not even get jailed, but was accused of corruption afterwards. In this period he attempted to put controls on capital and carry out some measure of limited social reform. What is capital's responsibility? Has it been willing to share the wealth? Has it been willing to share the profits? Has it been willing to accept greater taxation as it did in the 1960s and 1970s? No. The experience in Peru was capital flight, disinvestment, and sabotage of the social programme, which forced Garcia to either radicalise his programme by forcing capital to either play ball and reform or else get expropriated (by imposing capital controls through expropriation). But Garcia turned around and capitulated to an orthodox IMF programme.

So the theoretical question is whether social democracy is possible in an age where capital refuses to become a partner. Castanada argues that to some degree the Chilean experiences represent the new centre-left, which is not centre-left but centre-right, and institutes a liberal programme and spends more on poverty programmes. It is true that they reduced poverty for a while, but with the decline in copper prices they are cutting the social budget and poverty is increasing. Moreover, if you look more closely at the Chilean case, it is hardly a case of democracy. It is power sharing with Pinochet. It is maintaining Western inequalities in Latin America. Is this social democracy?

These examples illustrate that it is a utopian programme. When it came to implementing these ideas these 'social democrats' were much closer to liberalism than they were to the redistributive politics of social democracy. Finally, when he talks of social democracy for Latin America is he referring to Blair? Is he referring to the Swedes who are dismantling the social democratic programme? In other words, the social democrats he is talking about existed in the 1950s and 1960s and maybe the 1970s. The social democrats today are neo-

liberals, including Jospin in France, and support privatisation, etc. So where are his living examples today? Where is there a social democratic government that is redistributing wealth, increasing taxation, emphasising worker participation or public sector expansion? They do not exist; they only exist in his head.

What in your opinion are the prospects and challenges for socialism in the 21st Century?

The prospects are on two levels. On the objective level I think the prospects are very good. Today two-thirds of the world is in profound crisis, class crisis and systemic crisis. Capitalism in Asia is regressing with negative growth rates. The Chinese economy is heading into a major period of stagnation according to all the business journals. Yesterday China's finance minister said they were entering a period of stagnation and they would have to resort to fiscal deficit financing. In other words, he is kicking over some of the liberal recipes of the IMF. Japan is in negative growth mode. Russia is a catastrophe. Africa is in severe crisis as is Latin America. So only the imperialist countries are not in a state of regression, stagnation or collapse. Secondly, the bubble in the United States is growing. The question is not that it has exploited others and benefited elsewhere. It is now a question of whether the US can sustain its island of imperial prosperity and face a crisis ridden world. The prediction here is at least a recession in the near future.

Economically capitalism is in a deep crisis of stagnation now and this is not theoretical or prophetic. It is really living in negative growth rates. It is an empirical fact. Socially, the crisis is hitting the masses. There is social polarisation and massive unemployment in Asia with declining living standards and few opportunities to even relocate. This is not a cyclical crisis; it is a structural crisis. Objectively, then, it is clear that capitalism in the Third World is not a viable option. The argument used to be that it was an option based on the examples of developing countries in Latin America and then the Asian miracle. Today there are no examples of successful capitalist development in the Third World. That argument is out. Thus, there are strong objective reasons why we should return to some variant of socialism. It is clear the process of opening to markets, etc. has led to mass impoverishment. There is a need now to return to state planning, state control, and public ownership of the means of production.

The challenge for the left is, and this is where I think one needs to engage in more guarded optimism, is the fact that the subjective expression of this is only

beginning to find form and substance. Too much of the leftist *intelligentsia* is mired in anti-communism and taken in by the 'failure of socialism' argument. Compared to capitalism, the socialist Soviet Union was a smashing success. Any person can see that the health standards, living conditions, science and culture were superior in any objective historical comparison. Recognition of this is still blighted by many intellectuals because they have bought into the 'failure of socialism' theory. But the failure of capitalism far exceeds any of the limitations of socialism.

Secondly, I think we have a resurgence of critical thinking within Marxism that needs to be embodied in political formations that acknowledge that there was no democracy, civil liberties, etc. in socialism. This is more intellectual debate and not yet incorporated into struggle. It is a big subjective problem of connecting intellectual critiques with mass movements in struggles. Whoever is at fault or whatever is the point of disassociation, it seems to me, it is crucial to overcome the gap between the subjective and objective opportunities. We never will find more favorable objective circumstances than what we have worldwide. However, never has the gap between these objective opportunities and subjective responses been so great.

Uncle Sam

Entering through the policed door way
of your lair
gridded real estate
a mosaic of opulence
planted with pharaohic marvels
broom stick thin skyscrapers
fantasies of civilizations cradle.
Yet, bullying the world with hi-tec weapons
and your son Rambo.



CHAPTER FOUR

Leo Panitch

Editor of Socialist Register

When did you get involved in leftwing politics and what were the influences that led you to engage in socialist politics?

I come from a working-class family, from a town which is very well known for making fur coats. In my family there were very strong socialist influences. My childhood was full of arguments between my mother's sister who was a communist and my father who was a social democrat over the Hitler-Stalin pact. So I always felt part of the left. At the University of Manitoba my closest friend was a great Marxist. I was also active in student politics. I was a treasurer of the student union and led a march which received some media attention. A member of my family saw me on television leading this march and at Passover dinner he yelled: "You fucking communist".

I was still pretty much a reformist until I won a commonwealth scholarship and went to study at the London School of Economics. I did not know what I wanted to do, but I heard these lectures by Ralph Millband. I began from that point on thinking of myself as a Marxist, but was never, like many of my great contemporaries, a member of a leftist party. I never joined, as many of the radical students did at the LSE, a Trotskyist group. I always thought myself anti-Leninist, I guess, in the sense of being critical also of Trotskyist parties trying to be more Leninist than Leninists would, especially in terms of the acceptance of that form of democratic centralism. I certainly saw myself as part of the tradition of independent socialists, a New Left, as represented by Miliband and E.P. Thompson.

When I came back to Canada I joined a group that had been expelled from the Social Democratic Party in Canada and formed the New Democratic Party (NDP). It was a leftwing group inside the NDP from about 1969 to 1972. It was very anti-imperialist or anti-American, calling for the withdrawal from NATO and calling for much more independent opposition on the part of the labour movement. Many of the old trade unionists in our group had been in the CP from 1956 to 1968. We also formed 'The Movement for an Independent Canada'. It soon split over nationalists versus class orientation with some of the leadership taking the position that the American working class was their enemy

and others, including me of course, opposing this. We were doing a lot of good work, especially with public sector unions in the city I was living in. So we kept going. We founded a new group called the Committee for Labour Action, which was explicitly Marxist, and they did educational and propaganda work with radio news. We built very close ties with union leadership and developed some of the young cadres who now work in the public sector unions in senior positions. We auctioned off a bottle of scotch to whoever came up with the best name for our organisation when we turned it into a party and we gave it to the guy who wanted to call it the NDPML, The New Democratic Party ML. We were never able to form it into a party; we kept waiting for somebody else to come along that we could attach our base to and that never happened. In 1983 we finally organised a meeting of the 300 independent socialists in our area. We did not invite anybody who was already in a party, so we did not invite people in the CP, for instance, or in the NDP. But there were a lot of independent activists and feminists, a lot of people who had left the Trotskyist groups, and the Maoists who had fallen apart, etc. We had a very large meeting and proposed a pre-party formation and we would put five to ten people to work full time to raise the money. They would go and organise groups across the country, and we would see in five years whether we were in position to form.

There was very little sectarianism except among radical feminists who were not sure that they wanted to work with men. Everybody else was walking on eggshells not to be sectarian, but everybody was afraid to get involved in party building again. They were already going to 50 meetings a week with the unions or the feminist movement and it was the height of the peace movement too. The people were not young enough. Many were over 35 and already building families, and were going to many meetings and were afraid to commit themselves. So that was one of the last attempts I made to actually found an organisation. Actually, together with a close comrade, I attempted one last time in Toronto, with some help with Communist Party money. When the Communist Party split, they gave us money to fund a socialist newspaper. So that is the very potted history of my political life.

Actually more intellectual rather than a serious activist history.

What kind of role and impact do you think the Socialist Register has played in the struggle for socialism?

I would rather you answer that question than me. There is a man called George

Ross who used to write for the *Register* and is still on the correspondent editor's list. He teaches at Brandise in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and he says that if you want to be read in Alexandria, Egypt, publish in the *Register*, but if you want to be read in Cambridge, Massachusetts, don't. I think that is very true; the *Register* has real influence, I think, tell me if I am wrong, in places like Johannesburg, Alexandria, etc. and it has very little influence amongst the *intelligentsia* in Oxford and Harvard. In one sense I am proud of that, but in another sense I think it is a shame because the nature of the *Register* and most other journals on the left, is that it prides itself on the highest quality scholarship along with being completely politically committed. This is in contrast to the *New Left Review* which has increasingly become very ideologically and politically confused and sometimes sectarian. A lot of people see the *Register* as standing alone because, not that it reviews very good stuff but it always does short stuff and to its credit it aims at the level of a high school teacher. The *Register* is very hard to read and very hard to write for. It is not a mass journal; it is our hope that we have influence by trickling down, but it seems to me that is what its significance is.

One of my life's proudest moments was when I met a young man called Gerard Greenfield, who is now only in his mid-twenties. He is organising with independent unions in Indonesia right now, but over the last few years he has been working with trade unions in Vietnam. I was in Hanoi a few years ago, in 1993, and Lawrence Harris had given me the names of some Australian aid workers. I called them and had dinner with them and they did not know who I was and what I did. When they asked me what I did, I said, 'I work on labour'. They said, 'Oh! If you work on labour you must meet Gerard.' So I phoned him the next day; he was translating for the trade unions there. I phoned him and he said, 'Are you *the* Leo Panitch?' and he proceeded to quote things Alan Wood had published in the *Register*. I asked if he would write a piece for the *Register*, which he did. It was on the development of capitalism in Vietnam, which was published in the 1994 *Register*. This experience taught me many things: Who is reading the *Register*? Who's finding it? Who is it trickling down to? It doesn't have a big distribution and sells between 2 000-3 000 copies.

What has been the impact of neoliberalism on the state in Canada? And what kind of militant struggles have been waged against neoliberalisation?

The first thing to say is that unlike other countries such as the United States or Britain, the ideology of a living neo-liberalism never really took. Most of the same things have been done, but nobody has won an election at the national level

on a radical free-market platform like the kind of Thatcher and Reagan. One of the reasons for this is that to win on that kind of platform you have to have had an imperialist past. Reagan and Thatcher won an election by saying we will make Britain or we will make the United States great again. The politician running in Canada who would say I will make Canada great again would be laughed at. It is true that neo-liberal things have been done, but usually by politicians who are probably typical patronage politicians, who promised everything to everybody instead of their free-market ideology. Recently the new democratic government in Ontario was defeated by a far-right conservative government party, which did have a neo-liberal ideology. I think that they won by default and not because of their free-market ideology. They do have free market ideologists, more than most probably. But I think they won in a negative way, because of the mistakes of the NDP rather than because of a positive vote.

When you refer to militant activities there have been some one-day general strikes in Ontario against this government, which have been very impressive. Toronto was closed down and it was great to see the stockbrokers trying to get into their offices in downtown Toronto wearing their working clothes, not suits, wearing check shirts and blue jeans. It was fantastic. There was a series of cities closed down by these one-day general strikes and they were run by a coalition of the Ontario Federation of Labour Unions and the social movements, usually networks of social justice or coalition groups that had been set up in each city. It caused, however, a great deal of friction with the NDP; the social movements did not want the strikes to be associated with support from the NDP. The right and centre of the labour movement's politics are entirely defined by their link with the NDP and this produced a great deal of friction inside the labour movement because they did not invite the NDP leaders to come and speak at any of the rallies at the general strike. This led to a danger of a real split in the unions. It was already the case that the public-sector unions and the Canadian autoworkers did not support the NDP in the last election; they did not support any other party. The NDP had introduced a wage policy which the unions did not agree with and which triggered the strikes and so on.

It was also the case that even if there was no split, the unions did not know what to do after the general strikes. Who do you lean on? And even the left, which is very good, especially the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) leadership, does not know where to take their opposition to the NDP. It is not unlike South Africa where people are not ready to make the break to a labour party. Of course the CP, on the other hand, in Canada is a marginal and irrelevant force. That is not to say

that it has not produced very good cadres; it has. The labour movement in Canada is caught in this impasse.

With globalizing capitalism dislodging the Left in many parts of the world what is the state of the Left in Canada today?

Well, intellectually, ideologically, the left has been much less defeated in Canada than in almost any other country I know. Maybe we are just as usual old fashioned and it will take us 10 years to catch up and we will just be as defeated as everybody else. It has, I think, to do with the fact that neo-liberalism has not yet ideologically triumphed fully in Canada. It also has to do with the fact that for some strange reason Canada has been a very vibrant place for Marxist thought in the 1970s, and it continued to be vibrant in the 1980s and 1990s when elsewhere it had died.

I think that globalisation, which was such a shock to the left in many places, never came as a surprise to Canadians. We lived with globalization the whole century and it made us less frightened by what globalisation is substantively. We developed in the face of this penetration by foreign capital. That is intellectually speaking.

Politically speaking, the women's movement in the 1980s was led by socialists. That is pretty rare. In particular, at the end of the 1980s it was led by a former Trotskyist, a woman called Judy Rebeck, who had, like Tony Ben, this incredible capacity to speak publicly as a socialist. This is very difficult to do but she could do it through a women's organisation that operated at the national level. It had an enormous influence and it linked up with poor people's struggles and labour movement struggles in many ways as well as doing all kinds of good stuff around abortion rights. It now unfortunately has run out of steam very severely; it was government funded but the government withdrew the funding as it became led by the left. She passed the leadership first to women from East India and then to black women; there were splits in the organisation and they were not as effective as she was. It no longer has the vibrancy it had. Some of the ecology movement was socialist and a good section of the labour movement especially in the public sectors. The postal workers, the leadership of the largest union of the public employees is a friend of ours and of course the autoworkers, which has, I think, the ideologically clearest analysis and critique of globalisation of any labour organisation in the world.

Some of this Sam Gindin is responsible for but by no means all of it. There always remained, unlike in the American autoworkers, a left led by the communists, partly because of Canada's slightly different history. This meant that when people of Gindin's generation came into the union they already had a legacy and a base to build on, which was totally destroyed in the American union. That has meant that there has been a link between the left and the labour movement, the women's movement, and some of the ecology movement, which has given us courage and a sense of purpose and solidarity.

We have not had an enormously positive effect and we can only hold on so long in Canada, and given our dependence on the United States it is necessary for the American left to get its shit together so we can survive.

What role has the NDP, the institutional left, played in the current conjuncture?

That is a very difficult question. The NDP itself is now moving to the right; it is moving in a Blair right direction, very explicitly and consciously. There is a big fight in the open now. The NDP got elected in 1990 and when it got elected in Ontario, which in population size is as big as Sweden, this was really important. Ontario has a very powerful financial and industrial capitalist base. The NDP was elected also partially by default because there had been various financial scandals in the previous government and they were lucky enough that government called an election just as the recession of 1990 was beginning. Unemployment in Toronto more than doubled during the course of the election campaign and the NDP for the first time won in Ontario. Through York University we urged them to try and democratise the state and so people would be responsive. To put people to work organising single mothers against the welfare bureaucracy, to put resources into the hands of community organisations and groups to do things for themselves. Ginden proposed to them that the information inside the Ministry of Industry be passed over to the unions so they could develop industrial plans. They gave us a little money to organise a conference on this, but apart from that they ran away. The night that Bob Ray was elected premier, he was asked what he would do with the bureaucracy and he said, 'I have been called the son of many things but most people forget that I am the son of a bureaucrat.' His father was a senior official in the External Affairs Ministry. He behaved in a completely parliamentarist fashion, you know, one of those social democrats who completely accepted the structure of the political process.

Economically they were in a difficult position. They ascended in the middle of a recession and had no understanding of how deep the recession was. They introduced a minor inflationary budget, the first time round, but then recoiled when told the deficit was going to get bigger. They panicked and cut public sector salaries. We proposed a moratorium on debt. They said we are crazy. For most part their policy was to invest in labour vocational training, to raise the value that workers could add in hi-tech industries to make Ontario more competitive. It was absurd; it was absurd for three reasons. One, it would take two generations for Canada to develop a kind of vocational training system that exists in Germany, which has taken a century to build. Second, it was unethical. If they succeeded in being competitive, what would be the effect ? They would export their unemployment to upper New York State; that was not a socialist conception. Third, it was ideologically terrible because it meant certain regions make it and other regions do not (i.e. certain regions are entrepreneurial, educated and competitive while other regions are not?). It is like seeing someone starving on the street, homeless. What do you say to him? You are uneducated, you are not entrepreneurial, you are not competitive, or do you say there is something wrong with this fucking system!

Their whole message was about 'competitiveness'. When they turned on the public sector workers in the face of the deficit they handed the election to the right because the right had always said the state is responsible for the problem. The public sector workers are inefficient; public sector expenditure is the problem and they completely fed into it. I am being unfair. They did some good things. You know, they gave 29 million dollars for native radio, this was important. There were many small little things, like this which they did and which mattered.

What kind of impact has NAFTA had on the Canadian economy?

The left was concerned about an American type free market. Ideologically it suggested we had a positive thing. The Canadian state was sweet, we had universal health care and so on. But this ideological position merely remained anti-American. There was a lot of hysteria about high unemployment. For a period there was massive unemployment, but that was partly because Canada kept a high dollar line as a way of not frightening the American Congress that there would be a bigger trade imbalance between Canada and the United States. In the last few years the Canadian government has let the Canadian dollar fall. This has really promoted our exports especially from Ontario, so there has been

a very vast increase in exports. Some industries have been forced to close, furniture type of textiles and so on, but the auto centres have done very, very well in particular, and that is the engine of growth.

Canada has a very high rate of unemployment; it pushes 10%. I think that has partially to do with the commodity nature of our economy. There is no doubt that the Asian crisis has led to a lot of pressure on commodity prices and Canada suffered as a result. Even so farmers have done relatively well compared to American farmers because our dollar is so low. What effect has NAFTA had apart from that? It has meant that some of the kinds of left nationalist policies that a liberal government may otherwise follow have been limited. Now they are not socialist policies in any case but they have been limited and there used to be a degree of monitoring over foreign investment, which no longer exists. There has been an inflow of American capital, not so much to invest as simply to buy up existing industry because the Canadian dollar is so low. There are absolutely no restrictions on the Americans coming up and buying up the economy even more. This is negative, but one should not overblow it because it is not as if the Canadian bourgeoisie is necessarily better than the foreign bourgeoisie.

What has been the impact of the neo-liberal agenda on the state?

I think there has been an enormous amount of confusion about this question. Neoliberals ideologically justify what they are doing in terms of the state, less taxes and so on. It has a certain appeal about it. It is all about efficiency. The left has responded by attacking neo-liberalism for reducing the state and saying we need more state. I think the analysis is wrong. Neo-liberalism has not reduced the state in a whole bunch of different ways.

I will give you some examples. When you reduce welfare, which certainly has been done, the courts and the welfare offices do not really empty; more people come to them. They have not gotten smaller at all; they have become more cohesive, but they have not gotten smaller. There is less general entitlement but by virtue of that there has been more investigation; there has been more finding of fraud; there has been more incarceration. Thus, to treat this in a stupid way as more state versus less state misunderstands the conception. In a deeper sense neo-liberalism has been offered by states, bought by the bourgeoisies standing outside of states and forced upon states. States have done this. Who signed after all? Who negotiated the last round of GATT in the WTO? It is states who do it and are playing the role, like the welfare states, of trying to manage the capitalist

system and they manage it in different ways and different contexts of course. In the context of the contradictions of the crisis that emerged after 1973, they either had to move to much greater restrictions on capital or they had to move to opening up the free movement of capital as much as possible. Now who is the 'they'? The 'they' here refers to the dominant core states. Those are the states that have not been reduced to the role of the American state in making globalisation happen, which has been enormous. The left's tendency is to try to respond to neo-classical economists by saying the state is efficient. This has really been a terrible response and has really created enormous confusion. The left's response cannot be statist. It has to speak to people in terms of the state being responsible for globalisation rather than being a victim of it. It has to speak to people's fear in alienation of the state and that means that it has to pick up the tradition of the Paris commune, of that side of Marxism. Which, of course, wants to replace what is private with what is collective, but it wants to do it in a way that does not pretend that the existing state as it is now organised is correct.

So we need to think in a way that gets beyond this leftist idealisation of the state in the face of neo-liberalism. This is a problem because we also need to advance extremely radical proposals for the control of capital. There can be no progress without really radical controls on the movement of capital. There can be no democracy. What is it to have democracy if you cannot control the surplus that is produced in a given place? So the kind of Tobin Tax stuff is not a terrible thing. We need to ensure popular democratic control over investment. Through popular democratic control we need to ask: What is investment? Where is it invested? When is it invested? That cannot be done without the reintroduction of very extensive capital controls that existed in the Brettenwoods period before they were removed in the 1970s and 1980s. This a strong state needs to do. It is this very creative tension that we have to engage in: one of democratising the state, while at the same time, letting it have the powers to take capital away from capital. The left does not know how to do this.

Can you explain the current global capitalist crisis? What is going on?

The crisis is real. I think it reflects both over production in the context of the competition that now exists around the world and it reflects the enormous financial instability that this free movement of capital has generated. Both things at once; this tendency to over-production in terms of real goods and services and this orgy of speculation that drives the free movement of capital. It also reflects the weakness of capitalism relative to the earlier era; the era I grew

up in, when even a working-class kid was born with a silver spoon in his/her mouth. If he/she was born in 1945 this was the greatest living period in the world's history, but if you were even lucky enough to be born after 1973 then you were born in a different era. Capital keeps moving to try and find high profit rates. What does a capitalist do if he/she is not making the same profit as before? He/she invests in some place else, either in the same industry or another industry, but he/she goes somewhere to find it. If it is not found in production, then you find a lot of it in speculation.

But having said that, we should not underestimate how much planning those bourgeois states have done in the core countries to prevent the crisis descending into chaos. It's amazing how they have managed to keep things going. It is incredible. I do not think we should for a moment imagine that the treasury of the United States is not constantly talking to the Bank of Japan and its finance ministry and the Bank of England in order to pull this off. One should not think that it is all about to collapse, because a great deal of planning is going on. A lot of fingers are being stuck in dykes and one has to admire that planning. It does involve educating, giving the vocational training to the leaders of developing countries so that they will play a similar role in planning the chaos. You know, Tito Mboweni (South Africa's Reserve Bank Governor for the past few years) when he came to Toronto, to the same meeting that Enoch Godongwana was at, he left Toronto and went for a week to a merchant bank in New York. Tito was trained.¹ So the state also plays a very effective role in the crisis. It prevents things from sinking and this is very impressive.

What kind of strategies should the left employ in this context?

The real trick is to find a way to rebuild, relaunch, recreate mass socialist parties and you need a programme to do that. It has to be the kind of programme that can offer people at least the opportunity of mobilising in the streets for immediate reforms, while at the same time giving them a vision of a very radical long-run programme. Those two things have to somehow be combined. I am beginning to feel that my generation is now too old and it is a task that has to be taken up by your generation. A left program has to democratize the state but it also has to play an ideological role. In the short and long term it has to contribute to building new left organizations and revitalizing existing ones.

Has the collapse of Eastern Europe meant that socialism is no longer an alternative?

The answer is obviously no. Moreover if the implication of the question is that because of the collapse of Eastern Europe socialism failed, I would say no. The failure of socialism lies in things that went on long before the collapse of the Berlin Wall and even long before the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist elite decided to turn itself into a bourgeoisie. Its roots lie in the defeats suffered by Third World revolutionary movements in the mid 1970s and the defeats suffered by the New Left inside the advanced capitalist movements; the defeat of the left in the Labour Party around Tony Ben and Ken Livingstone; also the defeat of the democratic populist sensibilities of the student left and the fact that the really serious Marxists within that New Left drifted into Trotskyism and Maoism which was a dead end and which also never created new political organisations. All this long preceded the defeat of Eastern Europe and the creativity of it was that it rejected Eastern European communism along with Western capitalism; that was the creativity of my generation, of 1968. This generation however has its roots in the *Socialist Register*, in 1956 and 1957, in people like E.P.Thompson who left the Communist Party but did not leave Marxism. It was the coming together of people like Milliband, Saville, and Thompson who lead to the creation of the *Socialist Register*. These independent socialists were not able to create a socialist organisation, but it is not that they did not try. They did a lot of popular education. Thompson did workers education. Miliband set up networks of popular socialist education. Now it is true most of the Marxist academic intellectual left has never tried to build political organisation and those people have become post-structuralists, post-modernists, cultural studies and all that crap.

To be honest, those of us who tried to exist in terms of links with the labour movement have also been unable to do it. So it has been a great failure and it long preceded 1989; I think it has nothing to do with it. In fact it was my hope that 1989 might give it a new push, the idea that one could say, yes, there was no democracy there but there is no real democracy here to. They had a democracy movement there. Why can't we have a democracy movement here? In South Africa you had great potential to for a socialist alternative. You did not have to be confined by Soviet Marxism, given the creativity of the anti-apartheid struggle. But maybe your deal also contributed to the collapse of Eastern Europe.

What are the prospects and challenges confronting socialism as we close this century and begin a new one?

I think to be a socialist at the end of the 20th century involves a lot of faith. I

really think that if one is a socialist it is because one no longer has 'scientific convictions', that we are going to succeed, that we are ever going to get there. By 'we' I mean humanity; I do not mean me and my lifetime. In my lifetime we will never get there. That is okay because the problem for a great many 19th and 20th^h century socialists, including Marx, was the mix of their mortality with the historical advance and achievements of socialism. The faith we now have has to do with almost an ethical stand and a scientific conception of history that is different from the certainties of the past. Our scientific understanding has to be grounded in a creative Marxism.

So, an honest socialist with ethical condemnations of the system and a creative Marxist understanding of history has to also try and do something about the world. The question is whether we can develop again the commitment, to throw ourselves into the struggle, to not just tinker with the world, to not just marginally reform it and not to just go back to some welfare state that really never existed in most places including Canada. But actually, fundamentally change the world into a humane social order. Whether we can develop the commitment to do that knowing it will not be achieved in our lifetimes, that we will be like the worms in the soil preparing the fertile ground. Can we do this knowing that there is no historical inevitability or guarantee of success even in the long run? We need to commit to the socialist alternative simply to be true to ourselves. I think that there will be enough struggles, there are enough struggles under our noses, that one can point to against the exploitations and the injustices of the system and that socialists will have plenty to work with in trying to build the new mass movements that will have to make this possible.

Neoliberalism actually creates space for this. But this will also mean recognizing that social democracy has also been neoliberalised. It would mean splits then even in the labour movements. This is the challenge in Canada, if we want new left institution building to take place.

The Art of Survival

Migrant worker
guru of survival
built like Tarzan
pruning the trembling garden by day
swiftly gracing the dinner table
with service at night.

A fountainhead of subterranean wisdom
We sat at his feet
absorbing street wise pearls
imbibing the pedagogy of survival.

Mastering cost effective city navigation
local cuisine
clothes bazaars
citizens transport.

Graduating in the school of life
working the system dexterity
certified dodges of the tourist industry.



CHAPTER FIVE

Makotoh Itoh

Marxist Economist at Tokyo University

You are one of the leading Marxist intellectuals in South East Asia today. What have been the influences on your life that shaped your ideological orientation ?

In my student years there were many radical student movements at university. But I was rather attracted by the theoretical aspects of Marxist political economy, rather than political activity at that time. Although I joined many demonstrations at that time (like against the United States' imperialist policies) I was not among the leaders. I was very much influenced by my family profession and intended to be a scientist rather than a political economist. But I read a speech by Bertrand Russell on *Living in an Atomic Age*, where he posed important questions about scientific and technological progress in human history. Did it contribute to the welfare of human life? Or did it place human beings on the throne with a sword hanging over their heads? Bertrand Russell did not give us solid answers to these questions. But I felt studying science and technology would not help answer such important questions. So, I changed my professional direction because I believed there are some important problems in social and political fields. I entered the social sciences and at that time Marxist political economy was very influential within academia. I was influenced very much by the second and third generation academicians, Marxist political economists, in Japan.

In your writing on Japanese Marxist scholarship you present a sense of a rich tradition that has spanned the past century. Can you outline the key themes and contributions made by this tradition and what has been the main relationship between this scholarship and the socialist movement in Japan?

The chief contribution of Japanese Marxist political economists is difficult to pin down because it spans various areas. But all through these contributions - theories and applications - we have to think about the situation of Japanese capitalism in relation to Marx's basic theory of political economy. There are two major streams of thinking. One followed the Moscow line and believed there must be two steps in social revolutions. First there must be a bourgeois revolution since there remains a feudal structure in agriculture. Therefore in order to modernise Japanese society there must be a bourgeois revolution.

Socialist revolution was not the present target, but would come after the first steps of bourgeois revolution. This is one school. The other line of thinking was relatively minor and existed amongst a few groups. According to this perspective, since the Meiji restoration of 1868 we have been developing capitalist producers. While there are non-capitalist producers in agriculture they are decomposing into wage workers and therefore we can go straight into a socialist revolution. One step was enough. This school was called Rhono School and for this school the Meiji restoration was a type of bourgeois revolution.

From those two major schools many debates emerged. Very animated discussions took place around these theories such as values, ground rent to the very concrete levels of studies. From that debate, an offshoot of the minor school emerged. Uno, the founder of this school, made three important contributions. First, he made the methodological distinctions between the very basic principles of political economy which describe the movement of capitalism in a very pure theoretical model. He completed Marx's theory in the sense that he condensed it into very basic principles, omitting historical observations of Marx's age. In order to apply these basic principles to the very concrete world of Japanese capitalism we needed an intermediate theoretical level of studies which should be theories of capitalist development, in which various stages of development are formed. Lenin's work on imperialism, for example, must be understood as a systematic formulation of the newest stage of capitalism. In many Marxist works, it was understood as a new model of capitalism replacing Marx's *Capital*. Uno rejected this and said that Lenin's conception of imperialism was a third stage of capitalism which began with mercantilism, followed by the stage of liberalism and then came to the stage of imperialism. Hence, Marx's capital should be understood as a more basic theory, which could be a standard from which to formulate other stages as a whole. So the levels of research are different between Lenin's *Imperialism* and Marx's *Capital*.

By using this intermediate theory of the stages of capitalist development we can analyse our contemporary situation more flexibly taking into consideration many different stages of capitalism or different models of capitalism such as Germany which came later than in England. In Germany a very developed finance capital emerged alongside a peasantry in agriculture. So a mixture of these complex social formations represent a model of imperialist countries. Therefore Japanese capitalism should be analysed taking into consideration a general tendency as well as its concrete aspects, more flexibly.

The second important contribution by Uno was that ideology amongst Marxists should be based on objective, scientific studies. Marx's *Capital* should be regarded as an objective science. It should not be interpreted as something just based on ideology. The relationship between political ideology and objective science, in many cases, is interpreted as though only workers' ideologies can lead to a Marxist political economy. It rather weakens the objective base and therefore Uno believed the laws of ideology and science should be different or separate. In my youth this presentation was very impressive because in many activities many students, workers and political leaders tended to say that without being a worker in poor social conditions you cannot understand Marxist political economy. I came from a bourgeois family and I had a sort of complex about pursuing Marxist studies. However, Uno said Marx's *Capital* was an objective science which anyone could study. After studying Marx's *Capital* whether the issue is socialism or not was the next question. Marxism and socialism have to utilise these scientific studies but scientific studies have a relatively independent role to perform. It was easier for me to follow this line of argument.

The third important contribution of Uno was his focus on Marx's *Capital* as an objective scientific work. He reformulated its contents in beautiful ways. There is an English translation of one of Uno's major works, *The Principles of Political Economy*.

What would you consider to be your own major theoretical contribution to Japanese Marxist scholarship?

Probably there are four contributions. One was to consider the so-called transformation problem. By following Uno's work, I realized he did not say much about contemporary Western debates. When I joined the Western discussion there was a big debate about neo-Ricardian, neo-classicist and Marxist understandings of how to solve the transformation of value into prices. I think I contributed a lot to these debates. Part of my contribution is summarised in my first two books, *Value and Crisis* and *The Basic Theory of Capitalism*. This was the first contribution and my solution was appreciated more by Western scholars. The second contribution related to the theory of crisis. Uno's theory of economic crisis is very interesting. It's emphasis is on the difficulty of capital accumulation in relation to labour power. A failure to provide the value of labour as a commodity. When capital over-accumulates this limitation of labour integration leads to a rise of real wages, which squeezes profits. To this I

added that there must be a distortion of the price system in markets and speculation must develop to utilise price fluctuations by using credit mechanisms. Thus credit speculation is part of the basic mechanism that causes crisis.

This led to my third contribution on how to understand the contemporary economic crisis from the 1970s onwards. The beginning of the crisis in 1973 was not just caused through the oil crisis. The oil crisis was part of total over-accumulation of capital after the long boom period; it caused a lot of difficulties arising from shortages of many primary products in the world. Therefore profit squeeze, distortion of prices, speculations and financial instability were like the classic model of economic crisis. I, therefore, emphasised this mechanism in analysing the world crisis, which I did in my third book *World Economic Crisis and Japanese Capitalism*. The structure of capitalism changed, increasingly using and incorporating information technology, automation systems and microelectronics units. This reduced the unit of investment and made it more flexible for capitalism to move and reorganise the labour market and market for products. Intensified competition in the labour market and markets for commodities explains why capitalism became more competitive, borderless and flexible and revitalised markets from its depths. It is the foundation for neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism is not just reaction to the failure of Keynesianism. It must have a material foundation in the depths of capitalism. This revitalised capitalist market is a sort of reinforced spiral and reversal in history to Marx's age rather than Lenin's and the Keynesians. This explains how capitalism came to the depth of its basic nature. This was my third contribution.

A fourth contribution was how to understand socialism from a Marxist theoretical foundation. How to understand the failure of Soviet socialism? How to understand the Chinese experience? And so forth. I shall discuss this later.

The characterisation of capitalism in Japan has been a major theoretical and analytical issue amongst Marxists. Is that debate still relevant today and what is your opinion?

Initially, the major Feudalist School identified the backwardness of Japanese capitalism by focusing on the nature of feudal backwardness. They used to argue that this backwardness in human relationships was the result of feudal elements like family-type culture. Japanese co-operation and culture has a lot of family relations, communal feelings and a patriotic sense of human relations.

Then, in the 1970s and 1980s, Japanese capitalism strengthened its competitive power by using automation systems and micro-electronic systems. The crisis of natural resources like oil was most damaging to Japan because it does not have natural resources. It was felt that the oil crisis was fabricated by the CIA to attack Japan. However, the historical result was different and Japan became stronger. Its international competitive power increased despite a high-valued Yen. As a result per capita GDP surpassed that of the USA in 1987. Japan became number one amongst advanced capitalist countries. This was different from the initial crisis of the seventies. Then many Western scholars - sociologists, historians and economists - began praising the wonders of the Japanese system of co-operation (e.g., very strong society and co-operation between business societies and bureaucracies and so on). So the analysis of Japanese backwardness was reversed and all the things that were understood to be backward were suddenly held up and praised as the secret to how Japanese companies could surpass their competitors in other advanced capitalist countries. This was quite ironical and I was quite skeptical, following Uno's line of thinking. Essentially, we had to recognise more objectively how Japanese capitalism worked, but also its limitations.

In my opinion Japanese capitalism made us a company-centred society. If you look at Japanese society from the outside only Sony, Honda and Toyota are famous and no other firms. Even within Japan big business dominates too much and uses its economic and political power to advance its interests. Working people had very difficult conditions between the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. There was no substantial rise of real wages despite doubling productivity in manufacturing. Labour productivity doubles every ten years in Japanese manufacturing, whereas real wages remain stagnant. What does this mean? The gap would be used to intensify international competitive power, despite the appreciated Japanese Yen. So there was a powerful capitalist logic in Japan. This is my basic view.

How has neoliberalism impacted on class struggles in Japan?

Since the 1960s the period of high economic growth of Japanese capitalism the state played a certain role to assist and create suitable infrastructures throughout the Japanese economy, beginning with railways, roads, airports, telecommunications systems and so forth. But the major driving force of economic development came from capitalist accumulation itself. The state guided this, but could not be a base for economic growth. The relationship

between capital and labour was the basis for driving Japanese economic growth during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Neo-liberal policies also began to dominate in Japan. The big three companies - the railway company, telecommunications and tobacco - were all privatised. The labour movement suffered quite a lot from this process. In the process of privatisation, for example, the national railway company unbundled into six private companies and activists, particularly unionists, were passed over in the re-employment process. This was against labour laws and against the constitution. There were many other concerns expressed by the Labour Committee saying that these practices were unfair and that Japanese companies should prioritise the employment of workers that were previously employed. The advice was that they should end such unfair treatment. The private railway companies did not follow their advice. Activists still suffer with their families and they are still fighting; it has been over 10 years; the beginning was 1985.

Another key factor affecting the Japanese situation was the transformation of the labour movement in 1989. A new movement emerged which facilitated the spread of neoliberalism due to its anti-militant union ideology. This new movement placed an emphasis on social democracy and mild positions for labour.

Do you think the present woes of the capitalist system are an expression of the crisis of capitalism or a version of capitalism i.e. neo-liberalism?

That is an interesting question. I think both. Neo-liberalism in my judgement has caused a sort of market-oriented global order and national order. But you see increased financial instability in the global scene, speculation and bubbles. It reduces many people to a survivalist condition, more so than before. On the other side the gap between wealthier countries and poorer countries in the world is widening. Within many countries there is less tax for the rich alongside mass unemployment. Essentially disparities within and between societies has intensified, including Japan. Therefore I think from a human perspective neo-liberalism was a complete failure. Moreover, ecological problems are deepening, disrupting global conditions for the future together with the spread of disease (e.g. pollution and AIDs). The economic order of our lives must contain sustainability for the future and every economic system must contain the conditions for the reproduction of both human beings and nature. Currently both human beings and nature are being destroyed. This could be the result of the entire history of capitalist development. Thus, although neo-liberalism clearly

perpetuates this irrationality, capitalism itself seems to be in a very deep crisis from the standpoint of its entire modernizing history.

Currently most economic analysts refer to the crisis in East Asia as a contagious Asian flu with a domino-effect. What in your view has taken place in Asia over the past few years?

This is again a very big issue to discuss in a short period of time, but the Asian flu came from advanced capitalism including Japan. After the bubble burst in Japan, Japanese multinational companies, banks and financiers went to East Asian countries to create investment opportunities and caused bubbles. They bought real estate and invested in many parts of these economies including the stock market. Similarly, US capital came to invest in growing Asian economies. They had to grow their positions very quickly. Therefore the Asian flu was a result of powerful capitalist investments utilising very successful technologies to move around, engaging in speculative money-making in Asian countries.

In short, domino effects and the Asian flu were not caused by developing Asian countries themselves but by transnationalising capital.

What is your view on the role of the Japanese economy in the context of the Asian economic crisis?

It is true that Japan is responsible for a big part of the crisis in Asian economies. The Japanese economy crashed first and is partly responsible for causing bubbles in other Asian countries. Moreover, Japan's terms of recovery is creating difficult conditions for other Asian countries. In this context, some aspects of how Japan has tried to lead recovery in the region is important. For instance, the Japanese government proposed in late 1997 that an Asian monetary fund be established to counter the turbulence in Asian areas. Such a fund would be co-operative and ensure mutual assistance between Asian countries, invariably independent of the IMF and Washington. But the IMF intervened and did not allow it. The IMF said it would be contrary to current rescue operations. Therefore the Japanese government decided not to follow that idea.

After that the IMF, Washington and New York demanded more transparent free markets for multinational companies to invest and if this was done rescue loans would be forthcoming for Asian economies. This caused very complex feelings among Asian countries and prompted a sort of nationalism to defend them-

selves. If an Asian monetary fund was set up this would have been a more desirable solution. Japanese economic recovery is not certain under these new conditions. It is not foreseeable that Japanese growth would recover and assist other countries in the region. Many Asian countries look to China rather than Japan nowadays. There is more stability for their economies to link with the expanding markets of China than Japan.

Moreover, Japan is very, very stagnant. For the past two years we continued to have negative growth. The Japanese government expected to double growth, but 1% or just 0.5% would be the most they could reach this year. So negative growth is becoming a normal situation for Japan. Why? It is a big question again. For an economy whose population is decreasing rapidly, our economic progress is bound to be limited. The rapid decrease in the number of children has effects on the social system. For example, the university and educational system will have to deal with the issue of getting sufficient students. Without children, parents will not spend as much money for their household. Older people tend to worry about their old age and will not spend their income fully in the present in order to save for old age. The Japanese economy has already slowed down in consumer demand. Especially as neo-liberalism encourages cutting welfare, medical services become more expensive than before and pension funds are decreased. So people cannot look forward to a comfortable future.

In your recently published book on the political economy of socialism you contribute to a global debate. Can you tell us about the main issues you raise in your book?

Well, my book is a study of ideas and theories of socialism from the very beginning of Marxist political economy. It looks into the question of how to understand current advances of the labour theory of value for socialism and how to understand Marx's theory of capitalism as the basis for socialism. Although Marx did not discuss the programmes or plans for socialism, many believe Marx's contribution is confined to the critique of capitalism. I began to think about Marx's contribution more positively as a basis for thinking about socialism. Two examples can assist in understanding what I am saying. First, the role of the ruble in Soviet orthodoxy was considered to be money. My approach would be to think about money, like the ruble, from the standpoint of Marx's theory of money, finance and the credit system. This prompts us to ask why was the ruble considered to be money? What was its functions? How does money and forms of value relate to planning? Another example of using Marx's

thinking as the basis of socialism would be around the place of labour time. Again Soviet orthodoxy reduced socialism simply to planning and public ownership. Once this was achieved all economic life in the society could be organised in very simple ways that would be easy to manage. But, why did Russian planning use the ruble as the basis of value instead of labour? Marx believed that labour time should be the basis of value. Why did the Soviets not use labour time? What was the problem? I agree there is a deeper relationship and controversy about how to treat complex labour or skilled labour in the theory of value. These theoretical problems remain and must be thought about in the future. However, it is important for Marxist socialists to use theory more systematically.

Another contribution I make through my book is to question the centrality of Soviet orthodoxy and its prescription of 'one scientific way' to achieve socialism. I try and link the big debates about value theories and the socialist calculation debate to the larger question about why the Soviet model failed. Through this I explore various questions: What went wrong? What were the achievements? And what were the remaining issues for the future? Finally, besides questioning Soviet orthodoxy I also question the model of market socialism as a unique scientific solution for the future. I argue in my book that there is no specific and single scientific model to be presented at the moment. I argue that democracy is quite important and through democratic decision making countries should choose different models of socialism for the future according to their historical cultural background. While market socialism can be an option in some contexts, based on democratic decisionmaking, market socialism can be a variety of different models, with combinations of planning, markets, ownership structures and combinations of farms, enterprises and so on.

Can you give us your opinion on the future of socialism in China and possibly North Korea and Vietnam?

Well, China is quite interesting and important in the present world. Many Western observers tend to say that China is already on the road to capitalism. They argue that the market dominates and markets lead to capitalism. I am doubtful about this type of argument. I visited China several times and asked many persons about these issues. In my understanding they still maintain public ownership as the major form of organization; land is national property. Although the peasants can utilise certain portions of land in a family, it is basically not their private property. The land is the whole people's property and has to be returned

to the people if necessary. Privatisation is going on. However, Chinese strategy is to maintain public ownership in the joint stock company form. I am inclined to think that joint stock companies are very flexible forms of enterprise and can be utilised in many models of capitalism or for socialism as well.

There are also many small enterprises in villages. These small enterprises are now structured into joint stock enterprises but the principle is co-operative enterprises, therefore decision making is done by one vote for one person and not according to the amount of shares. This type of enterprise is called a co-operative joint stock company or something like that in China. It is inconceivable in the capitalist world. So this is a new thing in China.

In my understanding Vietnam is following China and probably Cuba also is very much influenced by China. North Korea is still isolated from China, although there are certain linkages. I am worried about the conditions in North Korea; it is too isolated from other countries. The economic situation seems very bad nowadays.

How should we deal with dogma and the socialist alternative?

My starting point is that there are different societies in the world. It used to be said that Marxism was dogmatic, arguing for just a single model for the future, following the Soviet model. Nowadays neo-liberalism is very dogmatic, arguing that in every country markets should be open and competitive following the United States. If it fails it is not due to imperfections of the market system. They can argue indefinitely for markets, to make markets more perfect with an ideal market in mind. But there are different elements in different countries. I think there is a fundamentalism in the position of neo-liberalism. Socialism should not follow such an attitude of fundamentalism nowadays. In the future we may unify the whole system into a homogenous kind of socialism but for the middle target we should be more tolerant and friendly, understanding different cultures and different socialist systems. People should be presented options and should choose themselves.

What are the prospects of socialism as we close this century and we enter the new century?

Well, there are a lot of opportunities for socialism although it suffered from the failure of the Soviet system. All socialists, even those whose ideological

positions argued against the Soviet model, suffered. Socialism is in deep crisis toward the end of our century and it includes the deep crisis of the subjective mind. Without a model of a better world, how can we persuade people to go beyond our capitalist system? It is a big question.

I think we have to strive to restructure socialism from the depths of our own theories and ideas. Marx critiqued capitalism, we must do the same in terms of our current reality and conditions of life. Through this scientific understanding of capitalism we can also think about the future. This will also give us the basis for hope.

Sumo Wrestler

Elephant legs
Gorilla body
Python neck
Grizzly arms
Tiger strength
Sparrow eyes.



CHAPTER SIX

Prabhat Patnaik

Marxist Economist at Jawaharlal Nehru University and member of the Communist Party India (Marxist)

What were the influences that gave rise to your political involvement and commitment to socialist politics?

That is very easy to answer. My father participated in the struggle and left his college education to join the 1930 civil disobedience movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. He was a freedom fighter, was arrested and so on. He actually devoted his whole life to the struggle for freedom and in the process he moved leftward and became a founder in 1934 of the Congress Socialist Party, in my home state. Many of the people in the Congress Socialist Party were Indian communists and my father was a founder of the Communist Party in this region. So from my childhood I was brought up in party offices in the midst of communist literature, discussions and so on. This, of course, did not immediately take me to socialism or communism because I went through a period during which I really rebelled against it. I reacted against it, but then when I came to college I started reading. I was doing economics and I started reading Marx in my coursework and I had a teacher who was a Marxist. In those days, the 1960s, in India there was a lot of radicalism some of which spilled over from the pre-independence period. So the general atmosphere was quite radical and I intellectually rediscovered socialism and communism. However, the fact that I had been exposed to it earlier certainly helped in the process.

Can you tell us about the Marxist tradition in India, particularly its theoretical and practical contributions?

Well, I would say India has a very rich Marxist tradition. But it is also a fact that the Indian Marxist tradition has tended to hide itself because Indian Marxists and communists always try to present their own theoretical innovations as if the ideas were all there in Marx, Lenin and Stalin. They never try to highlight the specificities of their contributions. But I would say Indian Marxists and communists have made very important contributions and I will speak about some of these.

At a practical level, the most important recent contribution has been the experimentation with Panchayats (local government). I think this is really a way

forward because Marxism and socialism in practice (as was handed down to us in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s) essentially looked upon development as a centralist tendency. Planning was centralised, the party was a centralist party and so on. Now, as opposed to this, in many Indian states where the left has been in power there has been a tremendous decentralisation. Kerala, for example, has a very important experiment in decentralised planning, which has really activated the people at lower levels through elected bodies and mass meetings of the whole village to impose accountability, to work out development plans, and so on. This has very important implications, not only in terms of the development of the state in India or an alternative development trajectory, but it is also a very significant theoretical shift in the way that we see the socialist experiment.

The other important practical contribution is around nation building. India has many nationalities, languages and ethnic groups. Now, the communists including the CPI(M) has always struggled (from the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and even now) to find ways of keeping these diverse groups together. In some respects and in trying to achieve this objective the communists have been trendsetters in India. More recently, for instance, in the left-ruled state of West Bengal there was a demand by the Gurkas (Nepalese settlers) to break up the state. But the communists suggested they could have autonomy within the state and set up an autonomous district council. This has been upheld and again it has been generalised to other states where it has not worked with as much success.

One of the important theoretical contributions emanating from Indian Marxism relates to economic theory and a critique of neoliberalism. In terms of this issue the political left as well as the academic left have played a role. One of the good things about India is that there is still a symbiotic relationship between the political and academic left. The former in many ways creates a space for the academic left to survive. The other important theoretical contribution relates to the question of class. While the intersection with caste has been a difficult issue, a class perspective has been crucial to understand and characterise the Indian bourgeoisie. This is so because the national bourgeoisie in India has been much more developed than other countries in this region, even more than the Chinese and Vietnamese bourgeoisies. In the colonial period the question was how to cope with bourgeois hegemony over the national struggle. How to characterise the bourgeoisie? Characterising bourgeois forces in the post-colonial period has also been important. Alternative theories have been tried out and together all of this has given the Communist Party a very rich theoretical tradition, which is

like a 'capital stock' of discourses and debates. I would say these are some of the ways in which communists have made theoretical contributions.

What are the causes of India's underdevelopment? Do you think the post-independence development strategy of state capitalism plus democratic planning was successful?

Well, I would say that the post-independence strategy is something that came into being in a very specific historical context. It grew out of the anti-colonial struggle and in that period there was a general consensus around it. The left supported it and Congress adopted it. But it was a specific product of the anti-colonial struggle.

Regarding the causes of India's underdevelopment, India was a country that was colonised for much longer (i.e. 150 years of colonisation) than any other large country. During this period India was a classic case of colonialism under-developing a country. Off course, one should not glorify the pre-colonial period. The pre-colonial period was not a land of milk and honey, but the important thing is that whatever development could have taken place was thwarted by colonialism. What is more, in the colonial period there was systematic and massive drain of surplus out of the country, which gave rise to a process of de-industrialisation and placed India in a context of an international division of labour in which it was essentially a primary commodity-producing country. Primary commodity production was at the expense of food grain production, which led to a decline in food grain availability during colonial rule. Moreover, the introduction of the railways and modern industry happened while the living conditions of the people worsened. In sheer physical terms, with recurring famines, conditions got much worse in terms of a dismally low life expectancy and in terms of every other social indicator.

State capitalism developed in this context. The Indian bourgeoisie could not have taken on imperialism. It could not have developed technological self-reliance or brought about the kind of financial structure that one needed for capitalist development. State capitalism in India was essential for autonomous, capitalist development. In fact this was the Indian bourgeoisie's target or objective at the time of independence. It was also supported by the left, because anything that was anti-imperialist and anti-colonial and took the country towards liberation from imperialism was supported by the left even though in the process it was clear that state capitalism was being used to develop

capitalism. The response to the aspirations of the people, however, was very feeble. Land reforms did not happen on a massive scale and even now in terms of literacy, health and education people are quite underdeveloped.

However, while state capitalism had some achievements and some successes it ran out of steam in India. This is mainly due to the lack of land reform. Capitalist development in India occurred in the context of extremely inequalitarian asset and land distribution. The domestic market was not expanded and agricultural output could have grown much faster, but the productive forces in agriculture remained arrested. And, what is more, even though state capitalism enlarged markets for capitalist development, there was also a phenomenon in which capitalists engaged in a process of primitive accumulation. They did not pay taxes and obtained all kinds of subsidies. So the fiscal crisis of the state that eventually engulfed Indian capitalism was a result of this expression of primitive accumulation. The state tried to resolve this fiscal crisis in various ways. One can go into different phases in which the state tried to overcome the contradictions of state capitalism, but let's not go into that. Eventually, in the late 1980s in the period of Rajiv Gandhi's rule, the contradictions of state capitalism were thought to be overcome by external borrowing. But this large-scale external borrowing eventually took its toll and as a result in 1991 the policy of structural adjustment was reintroduced.

With regard to structural adjustment, what was the impact on India ?

I believe that structural adjustment has three very basic consequences. First, it erodes a country's sovereignty and democracy. In democratic countries like India, structural adjustment eventually means an undermining of the democratic structures that already exist. This is very simple and is driven by the need to appease finance capital and international speculators. Eventually, the objective of the regime shifts from looking after the people's interests to retaining the confidence of international investors. Consequently, there will be anti-people policies enacted in order to retain that confidence. So, it is fundamentally undemocratic and erodes sovereignty.

The second consequence of structural adjustment is that it is essentially anti-egalitarian. It gives rise to large and significant increases in income inequality. Finally, structural adjustment also leads to stagnation and further re-enforces the other consequences. Many issues come to the fore in term of stagnation. State capital has not played the role of enlarging domestic markets and consequently

has not provided the stimulus for investment or growth. With state capital being whittled down and public investment shrinking the only stimulus for growth has been through exports and foreign direct investment (FDI). However, India's export of sophisticated manufactured goods has been constrained by the slow down in world trade and the failure to transform the domestic structure of the economy.

Liberalisation has also exacerbated this problem. As multi-nationals have captured particular markets de-industrialisation has also been happening. FDI has come into the economy in luxury goods sectors and in services. Cars, fast food joints etc. have been proliferating. However, this soon filters out and as a result an economy based on structural adjustment is an economy afflicted by stagnation. This is now becoming visible in India. The data we have on India shows that at the moment the country is moving into a very serious economic crisis with stagnation on the one hand and a very serious trade deficit on the other hand. Exports are not growing and imports have been rising. In the context of this crisis the multinational corporations are dumping goods on the Indian market. In an effort to close the trade deficit there has also been a shift from food crop production to cash crop production. This has inflationary impacts as food prices increase. Moreover, any effort to reduce the import bill by cutting back on government expenditure further accentuates the recession in the country. So, the country is now moving into a very serious crisis which ultimately is linked to structural adjustment.

For all these reasons poverty increased, which was justified on the grounds of being only transitional and that fairly soon higher growth rates would nullify this. But this cannot be believed because growth itself has gone down.

What is your perspective on imperialism and globalisation? What does this mean for development ?

I believe globalisation is a misnomer; it is a misleading term. Globalisation is not a neutral thing. What we are saying is 'globalisation' under imperialism, under imperialist hegemony. As a result, I would call globalisation a new phase of re-colonising the Third World and reversing the gains of decolonization. Of course, to say this does not mean that what is happening is exactly the same as what had prevailed earlier. There are three significant changes we have to recognize which provide the basis for neoliberal policies.

First, neo-liberal policies are driven by the globalization of finance. This is very different from Lenin's view. Inter-imperialist rivalries are not as sharp or significant as during Lenin's time. Also more than the alliance between finance and industry, which was observed by Lenin, is the rise of 'hot money'. These are powerful volumes of speculative flows, deployed wherever it wishes to make profits. Finally, globalised finance does not want barriers to its mobility. It wants a seamless market across nation states. In a world divided between rich and poor countries this has serious negative impacts on poor countries. Basically surplus is extracted from these countries and not directed into national development.

The second part of globalisation is multinational corporations or metropolitan industrial capital prying open Third World markets and in the process carrying out a centralisation of capital in the way that Marx had visualised (e.g. supplanting producers in Third World countries). The third aspect of globalization is about pushing Third World countries, including India, into becoming primary commodity producers again. For instance, WTO provisions make countries like India adjust their agricultural prices to world prices and force them to remove controls. In India at the moment there are controls on agricultural exports, but we are supposed to remove all of those and bring the domestic agricultural prices into conformity with world prices. This basically means the agriculture sector is freed to export whatever it likes. Obviously, in a situation like this, cheap food becomes an impossibility as purchasing power is much greater out in the world than here. Thus food security, etc. are undermined.

The three main motives of globalization under imperialism, therefore, are: globalisation of finance and opening up the world to financial flows, opening up national markets to metropolitan industrial capital and, of course, re-slotting Third World countries including India into a pattern of the international division of labour, which is reminiscent of colonial times. This, to my mind, is the essence of globalisation. And it is something that undermines food security, sovereignty and democracy, and also imposes stagnation on Third World countries.

What in your view caused the capitalist crisis that has seized most of South East Asia and Eastern Europe, particularly Russia?

In talking of the economic crisis we should distinguish between two different phases. The first phase began in the early 1980s and is one in which Latin America and Africa experienced a decade of retrogression. The retrogression

experienced has not been reversed in many of the countries. This is reflected in per capita output, which kept declining in the 1980s, but which has probably stopped declining in many of these countries, but it has not started increasing. So, in the case of Latin America and Africa, you have prolonged retrogression-cum-stagnation. Then in the case of the former socialist countries including Russia, there has been a very acute crisis in the context of neoliberal adjustment. The South East Asian countries were supposed to be an exception to the crisis. They were viewed as dynamic success stories and generally as being economies on the move. Then there was the collapse that took place with very sudden negative rates of growth. Even in the case of much of Western Europe unemployment has been high (in double digits between 10% and 15%) for quite some time now. In other words, the current phase of crisis is one where large parts of the world are afflicted by stagnation, retrogression, recession and collapse. It is still not a generalised crisis in the United States and Britain; they are still in a reasonably strong position within the capitalist world.

The second phase, which I expect might unfold, is a complete generalisation of this crisis. That is, when the entire capitalist world including the US and Britain are actually engulfed by this crisis. Now, why do I say so? This leads us to the question of why the crisis? All kinds of explanations have been put forward for this type of crisis. I do not want to go through all of them though some may have validity. To my mind, a major reason for the crisis, if not for its onset then at least for its perpetuation, is the whole globalisation of finance. The emergence of international finance is responsible for the crisis. This happens in two important respects.

Generally Keynesian demand management policy has been utilized to boost the level of activity in a capitalist country. Now Keynesian demand management becomes impossible in a situation where finance is freely mobile across countries. As a result no government can effect the kind of stimulation of demand that is required to come out of this crisis; no single government can do this. By limiting national government intervention this is the first way in which finance capital contributes to the crisis.

However, the exception to this has been the United States economy. As the leading capitalist economy it has been the locomotive for the rest of the capitalist world. This has enabled it to run fiscal deficits without fearing the dollar would be undermined. It has also managed a trade deficit. This has ensured other capitalist countries have access to its market. All of this has been central to its

leadership role. However, of late the US has increasingly become concerned about the impact of finance capital. It has begun to have concerns about whether the dollar could be undermined and hence over the past few years has begun to manage its fiscal deficit downwards. It has also tried to deal with its trade deficit. All of these are signs that finance capital is displacing the leading role of the US.

So these two phenomena - the undermining of the possibility of state intervention and the inability of the US to play the leadership role - are both caused by globalised finance. These are very important aspects to the current crisis.

What should the left response be to this?

Obviously the left in the Third World, in Europe, and in the US, each has to work out its programmes based on their specific and concrete situations. Obviously there has to be a certain overall perspective, but nonetheless the programme has to be geared to the local situation.

So I will talk about the Third World, and specifically India. What should the left do? I think it is quite important that in any particular country, if the left is in a position to decisively influence policy, it must do so carefully. Any departure from the hegemony of global finance is fraught with dangerous consequences in the sense that it would create transitional difficulties such as capital flight and so on, as it did in the case of South Africa. The moment a leftwing government is elected, on the very day it assumes office, billions of dollars will flow out. One should be clear about this. It is a very difficult situation for the left precisely because that which creates the conditions for its intervention also makes its intervention difficult. But this does not mean that the left cannot intervene. I believe it can but it has to intervene with the widest possible mobilisation.

For a start, there has to be control over capital flow; there is no question about that. There can be no autonomy for any kind of state policy unless there is intervention in the form of controls over capital flows. In countries like India, for instance, we do not have a convertible currency and the magnitude of cumulative short-term capital inflow is not that large relative to the reserves we have. In other words, in these countries, like India, even if the left comes to power and even if there is capital outflow the situation will not be so serious that the left government would come to its knees. So this is really important for us right now.

Moreover, we have to make sure things do not pass from this situation where intervention is still possible—in that sense our liberalisation is still not complete and as a minimum we have to freeze it there and not let it become more complete. Then, of course, we must slowly begin to reverse it. So control over capital flows and reversing liberalisation is essential. All of this requires political will. Political will can only be harnessed through the widest possible mobilization of the masses. This requires an alternative economic agenda. In the case of India, for instance, any alternative economic agenda would have to be significantly redistributive. The left has to promote an agenda of land reforms. It also has to promote an agenda of much greater increase of expenditure (e.g. social expenditure on health, primary education, literacy, rural development structure and so on) and much greater public expenditure on irrigation and extension facilities. Trade controls are also necessary to ensure that food security is not jeopardised. The enlarged social expenditure and investment by the state would have to be financed by direct taxation of the rich. In India, for instance, our taxation of the rich is extremely low; they do not pay much in taxes.

Finally, there is a very important issue that has to do with the state intervention itself. The state has to be accountable otherwise state intervention is something which has lost a lot of legitimacy. If the state is not seen as an accountable entity then it will lose social legitimacy. Introducing the accountability of the state is, of course, very essential in any democracy. One way that it can be done is through direct involvement of the people and for that I believe the kind of experiments currently taking place in India, through decentralised planning by elected bodies and by mobilising the people, have very great potential.

Thus, the three elements important for a leftist strategy in the case of India are: land redistribution, much larger government investment and social expenditure financed by direct taxes on the rich, and finally accountability of the state through, above all, decentralisation of decision making and resources. And all of this must be sustained by a situation where capital flows are controlled and even trade flows are controlled so that food security is not undermined.

Now all of this is not easy. But, on the other hand, I believe that in many countries (e.g. India and South Africa) the conditions for a left initiative are in fact favourable. Firstly, as I said, our liberalisation has not gone that far. There is a lot of very popular disillusionment. Secondly, India is a very large country and it is not very easy for anyone to push India around. Thirdly, India is a country that is largely self-sufficient. Other than oil, I cannot think of any essential commodi-

ties that India needs to import. It is like an economic ocean of continental size. So, that being the case, these conditions make the tasks of a left government easier.

With the current capitalist crisis and the lessons we are learning from failed socialist models, how should the left proceed to think about a socialist transition and a socialist alternative?

A very brief answer to this very important question is the following. One has to look at the entire experiment in the Soviet Union, which was, of course, copied elsewhere. Essentially we should not begin a model based on a hastily erected response to an acute capitalist crisis. Let us not forget that if anyone, any impartial observer, was looking at the world during the first half of the twentieth century, that observer could not but conclude that capitalism was finished. It was a period that saw two world wars, one great depression, the emergence of fascism, concentration camps, authoritarianism of all kinds and an upsurge of the colonial people. In other words, this was the period of the most acute crisis of capitalism. For Lenin, 'wherever opportunity arises the working class should seize power in alliance with the peasantry'. This brings forth a kind of intervention which was predicated on the belief that capitalism had entered the phase of general crisis and that wherever you seize power you do a holding operation, because elsewhere it is also going to break. To my mind, the whole Bolshevik experiment or Soviet experiment was a hastily erected structure that could have been altered, been transformed, if the revolution had indeed spread in Germany and elsewhere. But it did not. And what is more, I think the whole post-war scenario is one that moved away from the conception of the general crisis.

However, capitalism today, to my mind, is entering a period of general crisis. The crisis is not like the inter-war period; I do not see inter-imperialist rivalry leading to world war. Moreover, capitalism has managed its colonial contradiction very well because it has been trying to recolonise the post-colonial economy but having given political power to the colonies. The management of capitalist power is very different today. The whole context of inter-imperialist rivalry does not exist. Thus we have to abandon, once again, the idea that capitalism will fall like a house of cards. If this is the case, then we have to see the Soviet structure for what it was, namely a hastily erected structure in a situation where the strategic view was that capitalism would fall like a house of cards and in the process a vibrant socialism would emerge.

If we move away from this old conception of capitalist crisis and hasty socialist transition, then it follows that a very basic part of our understanding of socialism is that it is the ultimate form of democracy. In other words, I do not accept the contradiction posed by the right and sometimes by the left between socialism on the one hand and democracy on the other hand. I see socialist revolution as the limit or horizon of the democratic revolution. A democratic revolution carried to its limit is socialism. Therefore, we must make it absolutely clear that a socialist upsurge must take the form of carrying democracy to a higher level. And by this I do not only mean democracy in the political sense, but democracy in the sense of society, which includes democracy in terms of a democratic management of the economy. In other words, it really has to carry democracy to the highest level. Moreover, in order to ensure that this process of carrying democracy to the highest level does not get centralised and ossified, it is very important to have mechanisms and institutions for the direct involvement of the people in their own lives.

The idea of a centralised party running an economy and guiding society in the interest of a class, which in the process gets depoliticised, has to be abandoned. It is not enough to say 'democracy'; we need an activation of the people, which has to be institutionalised. Thus, from this point of view, when we think of socialism today we have to think in terms of structure, parties and strategy, all of which really must empower people to decide their own destiny. One of the good things about India's left and particularly its Marxist left is that we have a very long history of supporting and defending democratic structures. In India, we were one of the first democratically elected communist governments under comrade EMS Namboodiripad in 1957. There has been a Left Front government in West Bengal for more than 20 years. There is a Left Democratic Front government in Kerala.

Now, quite apart from the political involvement of the left in democracy, the left is also involved in social issues. I will give an example. There was this episode of *sati* in Rajasthan. *Sati* is when a widow burns herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. Nobody said anything when it happened. Obviously the right was jubilant and thousands of people went to the village where this woman burned herself. A day or so later the left made a noise in Delhi and a week later the left women's organisation had a march in Jaipur, which is the state capital of Rajasthan. Three weeks after the incident the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, condemned it and then it was officially condemned by everybody. Thus, it was the left that stood up and slowly built up opposition.

The left has a role even when the left is not in power. It has a fundamental role in preserving democratic structures in society through struggle for social emancipation of the oppressed, of the lower caste, of women and so on. It has to play a very important role in preserving what it has achieved and of course political democracy. This role of the left as a defender of democracy, which in India was built up over the decades during the freedom struggle, should not be filtered away on the basis of some theory inherited from the 1930s, which says all these bourgeois democracies are useless and that what we are really speaking about is the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat also means a dictatorship of the party, which is somehow meant to be a superior structure. I believe this is completely wrong and if we pursue it then we are going to lose all that has been built up over the last several decades.

What is your view on the Chinese road to socialism?

I have a lot of reservations about the Chinese economic experiment. Firstly, if you look at the Chinese economy and its economic performance, even though rates of growth have been apparently quite significant, I am not convinced about its impact; there is a big puzzle. There is substantial unemployment in China. There is a very serious problem of unemployment and if the economy has been growing at 8% to 10% over a 20-year period then, as happened in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the labour reserves should have been used up. Since they have so many unemployed, then either the growth has not generated much employment or the growth rate figures are not accurate. Be that as it may, unemployment is a very serious social issue in China. A growth that actually generates this kind of tension arising from unemployment must be carefully re-examined, especially by socialists.

Secondly, inequalities have increased quite significantly in recent years in China. Inter-regional inequalities, and both personal and inter-class inequalities have increased. One can say that this is the price to be paid in the process of developing high-growth productive forces. The important thing is that the party is not some alien entity that exists outside of society. The party is a part of society. If there are such inequalities taking place in society, it is, to my mind, idealistic to imagine that they can be kept in check through party intervention. These inequalities will invade the party and in fact the party will increasingly contain bourgeois forces. Thus, I have reservations about the extent, nature and implications of the economic experiment in China.

The other thing I have reservations about is the failure of the Chinese leadership to draw lessons from the collapse of Eastern Europe. The Chinese party leadership is not willing to accept that for a genuine socialism to prevail it has to be rooted in democratic structures. Socialism implies an activation of the oppressed classes who must also politically intervene. It is not good enough for the party to intervene in their name, which is the case of China. It is still the case that there is a very rigid intervention by the party in social and political life, which de-politicises the people. Moreover, in the Soviet Union the party was taken over from the top. If there is a situation where the masses are de-politicised and there is an economic experiment that is throwing up inequalities and a proto-bourgeoisie, then you will find that the proto-bourgeoisie may in fact capture the party apparatus and then the party becomes the means of liquidating socialism.

So, while I have a lot of admiration for the way the Chinese have so single-mindedly put economic growth on the agenda, I think the Chinese leadership in the party is not mindful of the dangers. Consequently, I have reservations about the Chinese experiment.

To some extent the Chinese are copying the South Korean developmental state experience. What are your views on the South Korean developmental state?

The South Korean model is what I would call neo-mercantilist development. Neo-mercantilist is where the state plays an active role in directing the development process. Land reforms have more or less eliminated the landlord class. There is a very close relationship between the state and the capitalist class. Indeed, the capitalist class is more or less brought into being by the largesse and patronage of the state and, in turn, the state can discipline the capitalist class. Thus, there is a kind of union between the state and capitalists. All of it is geared towards enlarging space in the international economy for exporting commodities and by having controls over imports and so on. This is the neo-mercantilist model. The problem with the neo-mercantilist model is that its very success will give rise to its very downfall in the sense that once the bourgeoisie comes into being, then it becomes difficult to have the same kind of discipline. Pressures build up inside for a change away from the old structures. At the same time, integration into the global economy brings in pressures, especially for financial liberalisation. With financial liberalisation you cannot have the same pattern of neo-mercantilist growth that existed earlier. The entire South Asian, South East Asian, and East Asian crises were a result of these countries undertaking financial liberalisation, which they undertook because of their very success.

Their very success puts pressure on them to become even more closely integrated with the international economy, including the international financial economy.

The South East Asian or East Asian model is not a socialist model. In all these countries the levels of democratic participation of the people are considerably low and consequently it is not a model for me. I do not accept the idea of these countries as models to follow. However, there is a lot one can learn from them (e.g. the necessity for land reforms, the necessity for enlarged education and the role the state can play in enlarging the space in the international economy). In short, the South Korean model has very serious problems arising from the fact that it is an authoritarian state driving capitalist industrialisation.

Does socialism have a future in the 21st Century?

Not only does socialism have a future, but I also think socialism has a very bright future. It arises from the fact that capitalism simply cannot solve humankind's problems and today we see large parts of the globe submerged in poverty. Post-war capitalism has seen the most tremendous boom in the entire history of capitalism. Now at the end of the boom, where are we? For a long time the idea was sold to us that this boom is something the Third World could participate in. We were told it was only our own cultural status and religious development that kept us out of it. But in Africa and Latin America these kinds of structures and forms have been gone for a long time. But where are they now? In South Asia they are also going, but where are we now? We are entering a crisis in East and South East Asia. As long as capitalism remains, the bulk of humankind will remain submerged in poverty. If anything, the very latest developments are a resounding confirmation of this. The fact that even South East Asia and East Asian economies are in crisis confirms this. They resoundingly confirm that capitalist structures keep the bulk of humankind, to which all of us belong, in extreme misery. With this being the case, there is absolutely no future for humankind other than through socialism. It is important that we also be clear about what socialism means and we should derive the correct lessons from socialism's history. We should not become prisoners of concepts inherited from different contexts and conjunctures.

There Is Only One Answer !

Belly of India
ripped open by the pillage
of colonialism.

Flesh of the country
snatched away
by the greed of its elite.

I hope the winds of change
blow once more
igniting the sparks
of flaming red
Revolution.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Aditya Nigam

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What influenced your commitment and involvement in socialist politics?

I grew up during a period in India when large mass movements were sweeping across the length and breadth of the country. That was the period of the early to mid-70s and you had big struggles on the working-class front, the peasant uprising of the Naxalites but which later degenerated into a small affair. Both 1973 and 1974 also saw mass movements in Gujarat and Bihar which also snowballed almost into an all-India movement. Now, it is true that most of these movements were led by non-left elements and later by people like Jayaprakash Nairian, who was a Gandhian socialist, and almost all parties across the left spectrum participated in it except for the Communist Party of India (CPI). Somehow that phase of radicalism coincided with the biggest ever railway strike in 1974 and with a worldwide tide of radical movements. That was the period during which Vietnam took place, large parts of Africa were liberated, and the conflict sharpened in El Salvador and Nicaragua. So, there was an overall atmosphere of radicalism that brought people like myself into the movement in the early to mid-70s. The coup in Chile was one landmark that I can go back to as one of the international influences that forced a rethinking about change.

What, in your opinion, has been the encounter of the Third World with Marxism as one dimension of modernity?

I think Marxism has been crucial and this has not been recognised in most debates about modernity. It is true that most countries, like India, encountered modernity through the colonial experience. But it was also the movements that were inspired by Marxism, like the labour movement etc., which brought the emancipatory ideals of this secular modern world into India. But there is a problem here which is also unrecognised. There is an inability, particularly in India with the Marxists and Communists, to come to grips with the reality of our own contexts. This is something that Vietnam and China paid particular attention to. Mao in fact talked about the Sinification of Marxism. If you look at most places where Marxism actually became part of mass consciousness, it was through a very deep-running dialogue with existing traditions of thought and daily life. This did happen to a certain extent in some parts of India. But, in a way,

the coming of modernity led to a kind of rupture that closed off the dialogue with pre-existing ways of thinking, conceptualising and being.

What has been the kind of theoretical engagement with Indian reality from within the Communist movement, given the multi-layered nature of the society? Put differently, there are a whole host of cleavages like religion, class, caste and language within Indian society. Has the Communist movement attempted to grapple with these issues?

I think this has practically not happened. A couple of the attempts which were made were very instrumental. These were mainly attempts to read the European trajectory into Indian history. Also it was not a European trajectory in a general sense, but was part of a Western European trajectory. This was universalised into the Stalinist canon. Engels also played a role in this, given his linear conception of history in a Hegelian kind of way, in his later writings. For example, one of the early leaders of the Communist movement, SA Dange, wrote a book called *From Primitive Communism to Slavery*, which actually attempted to fit India into a classical model of transition from non-class to class society.

Then we had EMS Namboodiripad's *History of Kerala*, which I think was published as the *National Question in Kerala*. It is interesting to see the way this author actually posed the problem itself. In Kerala, though the Communist movement had been very strong, Kerala had large sectors of society that were matrilineal. Women were large landowners, particularly amongst the Nair's. The way E.M.S. posed the problem was problematic. He asked the question: why is matrilineal society continuing in Kerala? Ostensibly matrilineal relations is a form prior to patriarchy and therefore its survival in Kerala is a sign of its backwardness. Thus, the emergence of a Brahminical caste system, which establishes patriarchy, was seen as a sign of a new historical phase and a higher level of development. Not surprising then that the Communists introduced land reform into Kerala and matrilineal property is transformed into patriarchal property, because the land was redistributed to men. So in a way, Communists became the carriers of Brahminism and patriarchy in Kerala. This is something which research in the past 15 to 20 years has highlighted.

Then we have certain other attempts. There was Rosa Deshpanday, Dange's daughter, who tried to develop a book on Marxism and Vedanta. She tried to show that Vedantic traditions already contained some elements of Marxism.

There was a whole lot of half-baked stuff with the exception of E.M.S who was quite an erudite leader. In his case the reading of Kerala's history and ultimately India's history expressed the hegemony of a Stalinist conception of history. One other attempt that should be mentioned is the philosopher, Devi Prasad Chattopadaya, who did a lot of work on Indian philosophy. Among his books is the title: What is living and what is dead in Indian philosophy? There is a lot to be said about it and I am not dismissing the work done by him, but if you go through these books it is interesting to note how Marxist categories are used to categorise and understand historical debates that occurred in a context that was completely different. Another big fallacy is that the history of all philosophy is about the war between two camps: idealism and materialism. It is part of that understanding that led Chattopadaya to read the entire philosophical tradition of India through Engels and Lenin.

I think these are the kinds of problems you end up with - the sterility you find in our intellectual Marxist culture.

The collapse of Eastern Europe has prompted a reflection on historical Marxism. How has this challenge been received and engaged with in India?

I would say it has not been engaged with so far. My sense is that all that has been written so far on the collapse of Eastern Europe can be grouped into two kinds of writing. On the one hand, you have strident reiteration of faith. The CPI(M) was one of the first parties to have an international seminar in Calcutta entitled *On the Continuing Relevance of Marxism*. Now, to have a seminar with a declared purpose to simply reaffirm the relevance of Marxism (which is also reflected in the way the question was posed), close on the heels of the collapse of the socialist world, rules out any interrogation of the socialist experience itself, of the movement, the philosophy, and how the philosophy grappled with realities where it was not born.

On the other hand, and subsequently there has been an area of writing from intellectuals with a different reiteration of faith. Here, there are writers like Aijaz Ahmad - a leading orthodox theorist - and a lot of others from various diverse Marxist backgrounds. From the Trotskyite background you have Achin Vanaik, and then Paresh Chattopadaya, who has written on the early Marx. You also have other contributions from Sumith Sarkar and Javed Alam. Now, these are not people in the same category as Aijaz Ahmed. At least with most of these other intellectuals, particularly in Javed Alam's recent book, there is an attempt to

grapple with some of the serious problems of modernity, of which Marxism itself is part. Hence you cannot talk of the continuing relevance of Marxism without engaging with the whole critique of modernity, which is something particularly Third World and post-Soviet countries have to confront. To quote a sentence from Javed Alam's book 'Modernity has a creeping sense of shame as it defends itself.' Now, if there is this creeping sense of shame, then, even for a self-professed Marxist like Javed who is a sensitive mind, there is a constant realisation that the encounter of Marxism and modernity for Third World countries has not been unproblematic. Similarly, historians like the venerated Marxist historian Sumith Sarkar have had to confront this issue. But the academic environment was vitiated partly because Marxists began seeing in the critique of modernity the ghost of post-modernism and post-structuralism, which was seen as something antithetical to Marxism. This caused a backlash in academia where there has been a culture and an attempt to come to terms with some of the problems of the contemporary world and Marxism. There is a kind of closure as a result of this.

I would still mention somebody like Partha Chatterjee, for example, with whose work we have some disagreements, but there is a serious effort to look at the entire experience of India's encounter with modernity, not specifically Marxism. It opens the way for serious introspection about the role and experience of the Marxist movement itself.

For a long time a particular version of Marxism has had an economic reductionist conception of power. This has also led to a statism and an instrumentalisation. How should we think about power today?

Marxism probably has more than one conception of power. The most predominant and prevalent understanding of power is derived from the material basis (i.e. relations of production, classes and so on). I think only one, a dominant strand, became the understanding of power in Marxism. In the historical and political writings of Marx, Lenin and Engels there is a relatively untheorised version of power. I say untheorised because there is a problem in these historical and political writings, in the way certain insights are brought into play in narrating and analysing historical events. In the case of Lenin this included grappling with a live political situation.

But, in fact, this notion of power, which is brought into play but not spelt out, is something none of them confronted in an explicit manner. Thus, for example,

Marx argues that in times of revolutionary crisis it is the working class that builds barricades. Obviously what Marx is saying is that the working class has not captured the means of production. He is talking about something else, a collectivity moving into action. For example, when Engels talks of the working-class movements becoming a power in the state in some West European countries as a result of legislative changes that were fought for and which led to enfranchisement, he is not talking of the working class controlling power or the means of production. In Lenin's notion of dual power the Soviets were considered alternative sources of power, but the Soviets were neither state nor organs controlling the means of production. It seems to me in these examples that there is a notion of power that we can extricate. Power is something borne out of human collectivities moving into action for the realisation of certain common aims. In this sense, power is a positive instance. Now, if this were the case, the question of power would not just be one of a class moving into action, but rather any collective human action that could rise to a situation of power. The other side of power, domination and repression, is always there, but is an important secondary aspect of power. If this was the case, then power cannot be thought of as derived from control of the means of production or the state. In which case we are already within a situation where we can begin to reconceptualise the entire field of the political as something autonomous from the process of production. This will be very controversial amongst Marxists, but I think our own history has enough indications to demonstrate it. Let me give an example from India.

In West Bengal, long before the Left Front government came into power, there were big peasant movements and the sharecroppers' struggle. These struggles resulted in a large growth in the peasant movement, which, in turn, became crucial to the victory of the Left Front. With the later introduction of Panchayats (i.e. organs of local government), there is a complete change in the power scenario of West Bengal. Things changed from a situation in which an ordinary sharecropper would not have the guts to raise his or her eyes or voice against the landlord to a situation in which these people were deciding what would happen in the countryside. They were the people not only taking decisions about development, but were also deciding whether the police should enter in a dispute over a share of the crop. Earlier, the police premises were located within the land of the landlords and naturally they would side with the landlords. Now there was a complete transformation of power relations without actually transforming property relations in any significant way. At that time, West Bengal had not gone for radical land reforms, but even without redistribution of land and simply

because of the strength of the peasant movement, there was a transformation in the power distribution of the countryside. This is something that can be repeatedly shown through our experience of the left movement in different parts of the country and even in the world. If this is the case, then we need to look seriously at the political process, which has a certain autonomy. It is true that West Bengal would not have been able to continue this kind of situation for very long without also transforming property relations. I am not saying these are completely unrelated processes. In the long term the consolidation of popular power has to go side by side with the transformation of property relations. But if it is true that transformation of power relations do not have to be preceded by transformation of property relations, and in fact they can precede the transformation of property relations, we actually have a way of thinking about politics where the attention to institutions and various other processes becomes not only crucial but also necessary.

This conception of power has to be linked to the historical debate on reform and revolution. Is there a debate in India today on revolutionary reforms which begin, in the context of capitalism, to transform power relations?

I think there is no conscious debate about this. In fact, up to a decade ago, CPI(M) practice was about transformation within the interstices of class society and under the class rule of the bourgeoisie. Theoretically, I think there is a closure. Opening up this question for theoretical debate somehow seems to provoke anxiety because the fear is that if we say this, are we then saying that the economy is not the sole or ultimate arbiter of the politically oppressed? Let's look closely at the CPI(M) position. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union the idea of revolution, however distant in the future, was there and therefore whatever was happening at a particular time was seen in some way as leading up to a revolutionary transformation. What happened, now, is that this distinct goal also seems to have gone and it appears as though what is being done right now is all that there is to it. That highlights the crucial difference of reform within revolution and pure reform.

But there is another kind of sense from a large number of people working with the Dalit groups, for instance. Dalits are what used to be formally the untouchable caste. There has been an upsurge in Dalit consciousness all over Northern and Western India and other parts as well. Increasingly it has taken on an all-India assertion. A lot of people working within this sector, who have been either open to Marxism or had some relationship to Marxism, are coming to grips

with the problem that is unarticulated or untheorised again. The problem of the Dalit movement is not the immediate capture of power in the Marxist sense, but here again Dalit upsurge in the countryside has led to a situation where power relations are drastically transformed. Up to five or six years ago it would have been unthinkable that a Dalit could go and cast his or her vote for the party of his or her choice. Today, transformation in the countryside is taking place simply as a matter of the assertion of this identity that says: now, we are going to take our destiny into our own hands. This transformation is actually a pointer to a kind of change taking place, which is altering social relations without necessarily disturbing the property distribution for the moment.

The conventional Marxist critique of the Dalit movement is that these Dalit leaders are all actually bourgeois leaders and are not really interested in the emancipation of the Dalits, because they are not raising questions of land reform and, ostensibly, the Dalits are a large number of agricultural labourers who would benefit only if class relations were changed. This is a completely misguided and misplaced critique of the Dalit movement because it misses the tremendous importance of organising in the life of an ordinary Dalit. It is a movement articulated in the language of caste, which Marxists consider a remnant of feudal ideology, but yet the lived experience of the Dalit only finds articulation in the language of caste. Therefore, for them it is not immediately relevant whether you are raising the slogan 'land to the tiller'. Incidentally, one of the leading Bahujan intellectuals associated with the Dalit movement made the critique that the central slogan of agrarian radicalism from the time of the Telengana movement was 'land to the tiller', but this was a slogan that actually never spoke to Indian reality. This is because Dalits were not agricultural castes. They were a caste that were either scavengers or removed dead bodies of animals and so on. So, simply talking about land to the tiller left out the most oppressed. Compared to the industrial proletariat it was more than economic exploitation that was being experienced but also ostracism and exclusion.

Hence, I would say, even if not theorised, there is a kind of practice emerging which is already keyed into the programme of transforming class relations within the interstices of class society. This may not have any revolutionary transformation on its immediate agenda, but it can, I am sure, go a long way towards achieving a radical democratic and revolutionary society.

In your theorisation of power, and given the myriad social movements in India, do you still believe in the salience of the notion of a vanguard?

Not at all. In fact, if you ask me to sum up the crux of my rethinking over the last ten years, particularly after the collapse of Eastern Europe, I would say the central problem is the problem of vanguardism. The idea of vanguardism was not simply an idea of a political vanguard, and I am not going into the different positions that Lenin himself has taken on the question of the party and the role of the party at various points in time. I also reject the accepted common-sense understanding of the vanguard of the working class as simply a political vanguard. The idea of a vanguard is based on a philosophical legacy. It articulates a philosophical position where certain people have some kind of epistemological privilege of knowing and having access to the magic of world history and therefore are the sole theorists.

The idea of a vanguard draws its legacy from two kinds of traditions: First, the enlightenment tradition where the enlightenment philosophers saw themselves as those who received light and who had to rid the rest of the world from darkness. The metaphor of light and darkness was very critically linked to this whole pedagogical project of the enlightenment of civilising, of educating. In fact, I think, it was this that Marx was reacting against in his theses on Feuerbach when he says the educator needs to be educated. In fact, the one-sidedness of the enlightenment project and its arrogance about its cognitive capabilities was a crucial part of Marx's concern, at least in his early writings. I think the way in which the idea of the vanguard was canonized into vanguardism is post-Marx rather than Marx's own.

The second tradition, from which this notion of vanguard draws quite implicitly, is the tradition of semitic religion where the text or the revelation can only be interpreted by certain authorised interpreters. It is the privilege of their location which provides them with the privilege of a particular vision that common humanity does not have access to and therefore this vanguard has to be constantly looked up to. Therefore the Leninist notion of a political vanguard party actually goes down in its philosophical genealogy to a very shady and very complicated kind of origin.

What have been the major achievements, setbacks and challenges of the Indian working class in the 20th century?

The working class has made certain democratic gains and has achieved certain labour laws. We have a fairly elaborate set of labour laws, but whether or not they are implemented is another matter. Nevertheless there are certain kinds of

safeguards and there is a degree of democratic negotiations. Especially in the public sector, the working class and the trade union movement has fairly solid rights.

However, I would say these are not strictly gains of the working class, because by itself the Indian working class has fought fairly victorious struggles only in small sectors. Across the length and breadth of India, a large part of what we have is the result of a complex set of circumstances, in which the legacy of the national movement was one part. Through negotiations between different classes under the Congress umbrella, a certain kind of possibility opened up in the founding moment of the Indian Republic, which incorporated certain kinds of changes. Most of the other laws go back to the British efforts. The first Factory Act of 1881 and the Trade Union Act passed in 1926, for example, are all legacies of British rule. What the Indian working class gained in terms of legal benefits was not a benign gift of the British, but, I would say, in a sense, an outcome of the conflict between the native Indian bourgeoisie, primarily based in the textile industry, and British textile magnates, based in Manchester. It is primarily through the conflict of interest between the Indian bourgeoisie and British industry that the first attempts at factory reform were initiated. It was actually at the behest of the Manchester lobbyists that the Royal Commission for Labour was constituted. It was out of that major exercise that these labour laws were enacted.

In 1881, there was in fact no working-class movement in India, but by 1926 there was a fledgling working-class movement. The working class was acting mainly on local issues and demands. In some cases, for example, the first strike by the Indian working class, hailed by Lenin as a sign of the awakening of the Indian working class, was in 1908 and Tiluk was arrested. Now, Tiluk was clearly part of the ultra-nationalist violent stream within Indian nationalism and much of the consolidation of the Hindu upper-class male domination of Indian nationalism can be traced back to people like Tiluk. I would be very wary of describing that working-class action as a sign of the awakening of the Indian working class. It was definitely a sign of identification of the Indian working class with the nationalist project to some extent, but certainly not an awakening in terms of its own class interests.

In the subsequent period we have certain prolonged battles taking place, smaller gains and victories. By and large it has been through a larger intervention in the democratic political set-up from which the Indian working class has been able to

gain something. For example, when the first Communist government came to power in Kerala it enacted some legislation from which the working class gained. When the United Front came into power in West Bengal the working class made some gains. But I do not think the independent, autonomous activity of the Indian working class has achieved much. From its inception it has been organised along party lines, first under the Congress and then the CPI. After independence practically every party had a trade union wing. Even the rightwing nationalists have their own trade union wing, which has become the largest trade union centre. None of the left organisations have a membership as large as this. The Indian working class has never acted as a class for itself and has always acted as the surrogate of some other formation, class or ideological position.

The challenge primarily requires us to look back over the recent decades. The most militant phase of working-class struggles was fought in West Bengal in the 1960s and 1970s. Now, what happened there? A large-scale capital flight out of West Bengal to other parts took place. This led to an accentuation of the process of de-industrialisation in West Bengal, which led to large-scale unemployment, so much so that when the Left Front came to power in 1977, it actually had to make efforts to invite industrial investment, to assure them of a peaceful climate. To assure them that the working class would be harnessed and working-class militancy would not be allowed to go beyond certain acceptable bounds. This is a very typical kind of experience which we have not really grappled with - the high degree of mobility of capital and the relatively immobile situation of labour. It seems that this is one problem that is repeated on a global scale.

With the onset of the conjuncture of globalisation, the mobility of capital has increased far beyond the 1950s and 1960s. Now, there is a highly volatile and mobile capital which has the capacity to deny the gains achieved through struggles. My sense is that we actually have to think beyond local struggles. How this will happen in a situation where there is disintegration of working-class organisations all over the world is a question that needs to be addressed more seriously. All I can say, in a country like India, we need to think more in terms of an autonomous working-class movement which is not represented only through parties or other formations. You cannot assume a working class exists as a political force. But what you actually have to do is negotiate a solidarity and it is probably in the course of that negotiation that something can emerge. In the end, a problem as complex as this cannot be dealt with solely within the confines of India. It requires global solidarities based on equality rather than mediated

through other kinds of organisation.

Do you think the disunity amongst the Communist left in India has contributed to the failure of a hegemonic left project in the country?

No, I would not say it is disunity. Given the political and theoretical understanding of the left here, even if they were politically united, I do not think it would have gone very far. I will illustrate this with one example. If you take Indian nationalism, in its formative years in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it increasingly acquired a communal, Hindu, upper-caste mould. And movements of the backward castes and questions of women, which were central to social reform of the mid-nineteenth century, were completely pushed off the nationalist agenda. In fact, nationalism began to assert itself by saying these were internal matters and they were not going to allow any negotiation on this. The position of the backward caste leaders was that they were clearly apprehensive about what would happen if the British left before their accounts with their local oppressors were settled. So a whole range of Dalit and backward caste leaders were ambivalent towards the nationalist movement. They were quite, in fact, comfortable about certain white colonial interventions in Indian society. It was not that they were any less nationalist than the upper-caste Hindus, but, I guess, hegemonic nationalism left no space for their self-assertion or negotiation within that structure of nationalism.

The Communist Party, and with hindsight this can be said, with its completely misguided understanding that anti-imperialism was the primary political task at that moment and therefore everything else had to be deferred until after independence, actually went along with the hegemonic nationalism which was becoming entrenched within the Congress. This alienated it from the most oppressed sections within Indian society. That is a history, more important than most, which sealed its fate. The possibility of striking roots amongst the most oppressed of Indian society was closed. There was a prominent cleavage there and an inability to listen to voices in the language of caste, because it was deemed to represent something backward. It was thought that secular categories like class and nation were somehow inherently more progressive than identities like caste. These secular categories became a convenient kind of façade within the hegemonic upper-caste Hindu nationalism so that it could establish and entrench itself. The result is that, even today, Indian nationalism is being questioned, interrogated and is unraveling under the impact of so many different smaller identities, most of which were pushed off the agenda a hundred years

ago. Once again the Communists are at the forefront of defending national unity against 'secessionism', 'separatism' and so on. I think that as long as we continue to see these assertions of subaltern identity in terms of categories of separatism, I am doubtful whether any unity of the left would make any difference. What is actually required is a reworking of the entire set of theoretical premises that informs the left's analysis of Indian society before any left unity can be thought of.

What are the challenges and prospects for socialism in the 21st century?

I do not believe in a pre-given end; that there is a final destiny for humanity which we are all heading towards. Socialism probably has to be thought of as a kind of project to be accomplished rather than a goal to be reached. It is something we are striving towards but which may not entertain the logic of history. Hence it is something that has to be constantly fought for, negotiated, struggled for, and so on. Now, if this is the case, then we have to look at the whole idea of socialism as one where we do not have any given agents - a privileged subject of history, a working class that would usher in socialism. Maybe socialism is the name we give to a society that would transcend capitalism but which has to be built by all those who are dispossessed and disempowered by capital. Therefore it does not have to look only at the modern sectors of the economy but also the pre-modern sectors, particularly in Third World post-colonial societies. For example, in India, twenty million tribals have been displaced by big development projects in pursuit of the great development dream, over the last few decades. They are as much victims of capitalism as the modern working class. A socialism whose programme or blueprint still has to be worked out in post-colonial societies must have some space for negotiating these diverse ways of living and being in the world rather than reiterating the old dogmas: tribal societies are remnants of the past that have to be liquidated as quickly as possible and, unless a full-blown capitalism comes into place, we cannot bring about socialism. I think that is a very dangerous kind of violence in the imagination of socialism which we have to overcome in the 21st century.

Russia

My pen is gripped by the past tense :
Czarist fiefdom

My thoughts rivetted :
October 1917

My consciousness illuminated :
Epochal moment in history

No one can erase this.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Boris Kagarlitsky

A Founding Member of the Party of Labour in Russia and Marxist Sociologist

What were the influences on your life that lead to your commitment to socialist politics?

It is a long story partly because it is a family story. My grandfather, for example, was a delegate to the first congress of Soviets though he was on the wrong list. He was on the nationalist list. Actually he was not very political; it was just the Russian Revolution. He was a Jewish soldier and during the revolution, they arrested all the officers and they had to elect somebody who was literate and who was on their side to meet the regiment Soviet. He was with them and he was elected. Interestingly enough, on my mother's side, the family had lots of Russian orthodox priests and my grandfather and his brother were the first people in the family not to take up that kind of career. Instead, my grandfather became a specialist in Russian art during the revolution. His brother Alexia was in the army also, but as a low-level officer. He was one of the few officers who joined the revolution.

During October 1917 when there was fighting between the Reds and the Whites in Moscow, Alexia led his unit and was shot but not killed. The soldiers thought that he was killed while leading his unit in attack and they named a street after him. Fortunately, he recovered and funnily enough he lived most of his life not far from the street which was named after him. Basically, Alexia and many like him were all socialist sympathisers of the revolutionary movement rather than communists or Bolsheviks. My grandfather was eventually repressed in Stalinist times and he spent 18 years in prison and internal exile in the country. When he finally returned to Moscow, the Stalinist government gave him an official status and an order. Essentially he ended his life by being accepted officially. In my family tradition there is an experience of being part of the revolutionary tradition and also experiencing the Stalinist repression. This story is not unique. What is more interesting is that today in Russia we can find literally hundreds of grandchildren of very important Bolshevik's or revolutionary personalities who have become neoliberals and incredible reactionaries. They represent a kind of reactionary anti-communist *intelligentsia*.

I think the uniqueness of my case is not that I had this background, but that we

respected this background in my family. I think this has largely got to do with the fact that we were not part of the Nomenklatura system (elites). My family was never involved with the official party structures - neither my grandfather nor my father were party members. So, in a sense, I think we kept some sort of a revolutionary tradition alive which was much safer in terms of us remaining socialists because a lot of official communists became anti-communists. In my family tradition that was simply impossible. I simply cannot imagine myself switching sides because I was very organically brought up with a socialist consciousness. At the same time, I was always very hostile towards Stalinism. In that sense also there were no Stalinist revelations for me. The crimes of Stalinism were nothing new to me but it has been fascinating watching people talk about Stalinist crimes as if they had just been discovered. These 'new revelations' are all completely demagogic and hypocritical because there was nothing new. Everything was known. Things were not public, but they were known. In that sense there were no new revelations in the 1980s or 1990s. They were already known - only the level of the exposure became different.

All these people who were in the Communist Party or were functionaries simply switched sides or rather they continued to be functionaries through the change of the regime. In my case I was in an underground socialist group when I was 20 and that was absolutely organic. I got my first political experience when I was 20, in 1982. I was amongst the young people who published and distributed a socialist journal *Levy Povorot*. We had something like 20-30 copies and that was enough for us to be imprisoned. I think we printed 20 issues and no more than 20-30 copies (each was typewritten). We did not possess any technology like the Xerox or anything. That group became known as The Group of Young Socialists and I spent 13 months in prison. This was a significant length of time but I should not exaggerate this kind of suffering. I spent my time in jail with top Serb bureaucrats who were arrested for bribes. I used that as an opportunity to learn more about how the Soviet economy was actually run. That gave me some insights that academic economists never had because they never had this experience.

I shared a cell with a person who was a top industrial bureaucrat and, because we had no escape from each other for months, every day we had to discuss something. So I used this as an opportunity to interview him. I gained a lot of knowledge about how things were operating. So, as a sociologist, I was very happy with that experience. When I was released I worked as a caretaker and as a postman. I was also writing a lot when *perestroika* started. At that stage the so-

called 'movements' emerged - the new political formations and groups - which were not necessarily dissident. These formations were kind of acceptable in the sense that many of them at least officially called for reforms in the Soviet system rather than for it to be dismantled. I always stress that most of the people who were involved at the original stage were honest in these demands. Of course, these movements disintegrated mainly during the early 1990s.

By that time I had already been elected to the Moscow City Soviet, which was a sort of provincial parliament of Moscow where I served for three years. I was there as one of the members of a group called the Moscow Left. We formed a group of non-Communist Party leftists. It is also very interesting that some of the people were leaving the Communist Party group in the Soviets by this time. All the people who led the Communist Party in the Soviet Union later joined the Yeltsin regime in one way or another. I am proud to say that not a single member of the socialist left or the Moscow Left group joined the administration or joined the regime at any stage.

In the long run this proved to be very important for our identity. People were invited, very often, as an attempt by the neo-liberals to co-opt some of the socialists, social democrats or reformed communists into a neo-liberal project. They were invited in order to present a sort of left face to the neo-liberal project (something like: 'Okay, let's accept capitalism but within capitalism we'll care about the poor people'), which many communists embraced. The argument was that there was no alternative but we have to be caring. I always took a very strong position against charity. I have nothing against individuals who are charitable but charity is not a leftwing policy. It is a bourgeois hypocritical answer to the social problem. Poverty has to be eradicated rather than just safeguarding people from being poor.

In 1988 I published a book abroad (published by Verso in England). It was a book on the history of Russian intellectuals called *The Thinking Reed*, as a result of which I became well known in the West. I even received the Isaac Deutscher memorial award in 1988 for this book. Another book, actually written earlier, was also published in Paris and in Russia. It was called the *Dialectic of Hope*, and is my only book not translated into English. I suddenly discovered myself being a significant voice in the western leftwing intellectual debate or milieu. The funny thing was that during that political period I was not able to publish anything in Russia because the newspapers rejected any author or writer who was any sort of leftist. The publishing houses had either closed down because

they were broke or neoliberals controlled them. So there was nowhere to publish anything in Russia; it was a brief period when they officially abandoned censorship. They said censorship had been abolished, but it was still strong in that era, stronger than during my experience in the Soviet period.

From 1991 to the end of 1992 was the only period when there was a total blackout for anyone who was any sort of dissident or disagreed with anything said by the government and top leaders. The policy of total control over all censorship was achieved very easily. Yes, officially there were no censors, but the editors of all the newspapers (before the liberation of censorship and before the privatisation of the newspapers) were, with only one exception throughout the whole of Russia, all appointed by the ideological department of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This was now in the hands of neoliberals. Alexandria Yakovich was running this committee and is now the leading anti-communist ideologue. At the time he became the leading anti-communist ideologue of the country, he was still running and promoting the ideological work of the Communist Party.

A change in the mid 1990s was moving the public in Russia visibly to the left. Some government newspapers started taking that into account and opened their pages to some leftwing opinion representatives. They allowed leftwing opinions to appear in their papers in order to attract readers otherwise people simply would not read these newspapers. In that sense censorship changed. In 1990 I was elected to the Soviet and since then I also worked with the trade unions - first with the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, and the so-called old trade unions; the trade unions we inherited from the communist system. There were also new ones that were established during 1989 which were mostly anti-communist during this period.

During that period this Moscow Left group in the Soviet, in the Moscow City parliament, tried to form a new political party called The Socialist Party. It received a lot of support from the trade unionists and then it was transformed into The Party of Labour around 1992. In October 1993 during the Yeltsin coup the trade union leaders were purged and new trade union leaders were appointed. The new leadership tried to transform the Party of Labour into a passive tool of the trade union bureaucracy, which was not the original project. The original project was to link the development of the party with the radicalisation of the unions. Also, the idea of the party was to form a political structure of a new type. It would be the continuation of their communist

tradition, on the one hand, in the sense of the communist tradition described in the Communist Manifesto, and at the same time, picking up some experiences of the leftwing socialist tradition and partly from the social democratic tradition, but rejecting both social democratic gradualism and social democratic acceptance of capitalism. On the other hand, we rejected Stalinist internal political practices and the kind of justifications of everything being done by the party and so on.

That was a very interesting project in the sense that a lot of interesting and intelligent people joined. But then it was destroyed by the trade union bureaucracy. After the October coup there was no political space for such a formation and the renewed Communist Party took over most of the political space. The trade union leaders of the new period, after 1993, not only gradually became more corrupt, they also became more or less uninterested in the trade union movement. For example, only 5% of the trade union budget in Russia is constituted by membership fees; the rest comes from property speculations and various businesses. So this meant that the trade union leadership was not interested in trade unions, their members nor labor struggles. These trade union leaders were interested in real estate prices, in the exchange rate of the dollar and such things, which were much more important than the workers. That level of degeneration of unions was totally unacceptable and almost everybody dropped out. I went to work for the Academy of Sciences where I am still employed.

It looks as if Russian politics is going through another change. You are reaching me at a time when I am re-engaging politics. There is also a young generation of activists emerging, most notably the Youth Communist League which is a very bright and interesting phenomenon. Well, we will probably see a very positive attempt at renewal by the left in the coming year or two, but we will probably speak about that later.

Over the past few centuries Russia has produced a dynamic intellectual culture. What have been the key preoccupations of this intelligentsia? And how would you map the contemporary Russian intelligentsia?

That is actually what I discussed in my book. Of course, the Russian intelligentsia was very particular because it had to face a very specific situation. Since the early 19th century the government produced a lot of educated people to run the country. At the same time, the government did not need all the capacities of these educated people. For example, it did not need all their ideas of enlightenment.

Pushkin, who was the Great Russian poet and a symbolic figure of Russian culture, said that the government was the only European in Russia. At the same time, he was continually in conflict with the government, because the government wanted to be European but it did not want European freedoms. It wanted enlightenment, but not enlightenment of political ideas. You must understand that it was an enlightened aristocratic dictatorship which managed, for example, to sell peasants like slaves and at the same time build roads and introduce some European education.

It needed to sell the slaves to finance its programmes of Europeanisation, to use the peasants as slaves to extort surplus, which was necessary for the project of Europeanisation. So, in that sense, the more European it was the more autocratic and inhumane it was. In a certain sense this contradiction of modernisation was everywhere in the world, but Russia was one of the first countries to go through this period of modernisation. The reflection of this paradox of modernisation was expressed through the Russian intelligentsia, which associated itself with the positive side of the process and started criticising the government for representing the negatives, the bad side of the process. That is why there were Russians among the first European socialists like Herzen and Bakunin who were Marx's contemporaries. Marx was very critical of them both, by the way, and not just of Alexander Herzen. I understand why. Herzen was very influenced by the anarchist Proudhon and that was the reason for Marx to view him with contempt.

By the late 19th century, Russian intellectuals were almost all socialists or at least they were sympathetic to socialism. They looked at themselves critically. They had a sense of guilt about them because their education was paid for by the suffering of the rest of the people. They had to return to the people for that reason and that is why there was this enormous participation of the intelligentsia in the revolution. Not in service of the Bolshevik side, by the way. There were many populist socialist revolutionaries. In the process, on the whole, they all participated in one way or the other. In the 1930s we saw the formation of the new intelligentsia which was coming from the ranks of the workers and peasants. Some of the old intelligentsia disappeared and some of the old bourgeoisie had to leave the country and many people died. Those in the revolutionary struggle became functionaries. In any case the country was rapidly industrialising and modernising and needed more professionals, intellectuals and educated people. There was a dramatic social change in the intelligentsia. This was partially due to a whole generation of young Jewish people who became a very crucial part of the Russian intelligentsia since the late 1920s. The Russian intelligentsia in

Tsarist times was ethnically Russian with maybe some Ukrainians. In the 1920s an enormous influx occurred in terms of the participation of ethnic non-Russians in the formation of the Russian intelligentsia, which included the participation of minorities, most notably Jews, but also others like Tartars, Georgians and Armenians.

Then, at a certain point, this new intelligentsia found itself in the same conflict with the Soviet system as the old Russian intelligentsia was with the Tsarist system. There was the idea that, on the one hand, there was rapid modernisation informed by ideals of social justice. On the other hand, they saw the price paid for these developments which included oppression, the suppression of freedoms, neglect towards individuals and individual rights. It was a very contradictory period. Workers and peasants had incredible possibilities for social mobility, education, promotion, etc. and many people were recruited into the bureaucracy. At the same time, the system used people in a totally inhumane way and there was a lot of suffering and a dis-respect towards those who were suffering. Interestingly enough, the people promoted from the bottom of society were very often the most cruel to the ones who remained under their control and indifferent to their suffering (perhaps because they felt that it was necessary for others to go through it since they had to). Most of the criticism of the system produced by the Soviet intelligentsia was formulated in such a way that it was almost Freudian, like an attempt at radical psychoanalysis. The system and the bureaucracy should understand itself, be ashamed of what it was doing, and then improve its ways. Ironically the main agent addressed by this kind of system was the system itself, the government itself. There was a belief that the foundations of the system were true, but it was accompanied by the growing degeneration of the system itself. The famous degeneration of the workers' state idea was formulated by Trotsky.

The state continued degenerating from the 1920s through the 1970s and early 1980s. This degeneration continued, but it was no longer a degenerating workers state as it degenerated to the point where it was no longer a workers' state. It was a bureaucratic state. At a certain stage the state acquired interests of its own, it acquired some kind of critical mass and felt that it was capable of running the country as a class, but a bureaucracy cannot be a class. To become a 'class bureaucracy' it needed to become a bourgeoisie. This coincided, not accidentally, with the degeneration of the economic system and the decline in the performance of the Soviet system. Hence it was no accident that the worst elements of Soviet bureaucracy carried out the reform. Though the reform was

objectively needed, it was led and carried out by the worst elements of this system who were the most interested in reform. They carried out reform in their own interests, not in the interests of the people. Interestingly enough, most of the intelligentsia of the generation formed in the 1960s, who were traditionally criticising the government, went along with the leadership. When the leadership declared capitalism, they declared capitalism. They just remained loyal to the system whether the system was communist or anti-communist; they became uncritical. Hence, the degeneration of the bureaucracy was accompanied by the degeneration of the intelligentsia, which was a double tragedy since at a certain level they used their authority among the people to manipulate and force the people to accept capitalism.

What we see now is a turning point. First of all, the old intelligentsia does not exist anymore. Now we have the elite, those who are integrated into the new system. Intellectuals are part of this elite, obtain wealth from it and are functionaries for this new bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the mass of teachers, doctors and researchers were among the people who suffered most from the neoliberal restructuring. Not only did their salaries and research money get cut, but most importantly the kind of economy the neoliberals are developing in this country will not need a lot of intellectuals or sizable education and healthcare systems. In that sense the whole inheritance of intellectuals has no future in this kind of economy, though it continues to mechanically produce young people with particular skills (and people want to have these skills and want to become educated as doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.).

This is now generating tremendous tension for a revolt, which is already starting. For example, tomorrow there is a big national strike of teachers in Russia. Ironically, this is the most militant sector of Russian labour; they are very organised, very militant and dramatically radicalising. They no longer try among the workers, though sometimes they do include the working class, some unemployed kids. Also, they are recruiting amongst the students or young professionals who see no future within this kind of capitalism that is emerging. In a sense, the Russian intelligentsia is becoming a base for the socialist movement that is re-emerging right now.

What is your understanding and interpretation of the experience of Stalinism and its impact on working-class history in this century?

Partly, I have already spoken about this. We definitely needed the 1917

Revolution; it was absolutely essential and historically necessary and unavoidable for Russia. At the same time, the degeneration of the Russian communist system was also logical because Russia was an underdeveloped country. The attempt to de-link (using Samir Amin's term) produced very negative effects. In that sense I agree with the Trotskyist criticism of Russian revolutionary history; that is, if the revolution is not internationalised a real socialistic experiment is doomed, not necessarily to fail, but to retreat into something. It will either retreat into some kind of reformism or it will deteriorate and degenerate into some kind of self-centered bureaucratic or autocratic social political system, which does not reflect our views of socialism. Given this kind of contradiction I think the reformist retreat is preferable to the totalitarian degeneration. This does not mean that you have to be a reformist. First of all the reformist retreat makes sense only when there are revolutionary successes. When there is a revolutionary breakthrough reformism becomes an attempt to consolidate certain real successes or achievements of the revolution. Otherwise it makes very little sense. Second, there is an alternative to the reformist retreat, which is a special revolutionary process. This is a preferable solution, but it is not the only solution and should not be idealised.

I think there was an alternative to Stalinism represented by Bukharin, on one side, and Trotsky and the left opposition on the other within the Russian Revolution. Both of these solutions were defeated. The Stalinist solution triumphed. It was about the consolidation of the regime at the price of abandoning the socialist project in the long run, while consolidating the regime on the base of the authoritarian, self-sufficient system. The regime had to retain some of the essential achievements of the revolution, like upward mobility for the lower classes, universal education and healthcare, and public property. Public property was a tool of the bureaucracy and at the same time restrained the very same bureaucracy, because it was not its property. Of course, in practice it was also very important for the regime to control the economy, business and every area of activity.

However, bureaucratic control of property also expressed the authoritarian nature of the state. This was not socialism and that was a contradiction of Stalinism. It is very important to understand because it is very confusing. It was very demoralising to the left because, on the one hand, there was a tendency to excuse it as not a real socialist system and not the kind of socialism we stood for, which allowed us not to worry about this system being destroyed, dismantled and so on. Although there are people who were worried because they believed it

was a socialist system and was dismantled, which was the destruction of the dream of the working people and so on.

Ironically, both positions are right and wrong, which is why they are so confusing. The system was not the kind of socialist movement we were fighting for since Karl Marx's time; it was really not the system Lenin and Burkharin fought for. In that sense, of course, one can praise the demise of Stalinism as a historically necessary event. It was not a socialism on the world scale or some form of real socialist democracy. But, on the other hand, we have to acknowledge that the system, produced by the great people's revolution, by the proletarian revolution, was a system that went through different stages in its history. For example, Brezhnev was responsible for some important social achievements which benefited working people.

However, at the same time, it was an attempt to pacify the working class, which was an exchange for the non-participation of the working class in political life. So it was an attempt to pacify the working class; it was a form of compensation (e.g., better pay, access to consumer goods, better flats, more possibilities in terms of daily life in terms of free time and in terms of traveling, even sometimes travelling abroad). In return, the working class was not to demand freedoms or get involved in running the country, which was for the bureaucrats to do. It was like saying 'Leave us alone, we don't want your stupid working-class demands!' Nevertheless workers got something real. They were pacified, but they saw it as a good deal, as an acceptable deal, at least for a generation. This must be seen very objectively. However, this does not mean the left must become nostalgic for some 'great past' or believe that the neoliberals are correct.

It would seem that 1980s Soviet society was at an impasse. Was perestroika and glasnost the appropriate response to this crisis?

Once again I think we have to be dialectical. From what I said earlier it is very clear that society needed to change (by the way, Soviet society had experienced change since the early 1960s). That is not to say that it needed political liberalisation, which was going on throughout the 1960s, but it needed some kind of economic change. It needed decentralisation and there were some attempts to decentralise in the Czechoslovakian Republic in 1968 which was suppressed by the Soviet Union in the famous Prague Spring.

However, this problem of decentralization remained in the Soviet Union. In the

past it was seen mainly as a managerial problem in the sense that central planning was based on all information processed at the centre. Information was aggregated at the centre and on that basis decisions were made and passed on to enterprises. It worked pretty well, by the way, during the period of industrialisation, because it concentrated decision-making powers, resources and information in the same place. This accelerated growth, which dramatically accelerated Soviet society. But there was the problem when the situation arose in which there were two or three big enterprises producing, for example, tractors or cars and another enterprise was needed. You simply built another one and then had three or four, etc. Your choices were very simple and solutions very visible. The important thing was to concentrate resources and decision making in one place. The Minister of Industry in Soviet times, under Stalin, personally knew every enterprise director in the huge factories. So he could just make a telephone call to personally discuss something when there was a problem. It was very simple.

In the 1950s and early 1960s the economy was much more developed. Problems could no longer simply be resolved by a phone call from the minister to the director; there were too many directors. It was not just the problem of building another plant. Rather, it was the problem of making existing plants work in an efficient and successful way. For example, important issues arose such as how to reach the consumers? How to satisfy consumers in terms of products produced by these plants? How to organise operations within hundreds of enterprises in a dynamic way? These problems cannot be resolved in this simple, centralist way, which was why decentralisation for managerial quality became necessary. Another issue was the flow of information. For information to go from the bottom to the top of the system it had to pass through many stages because the system became bigger and more hierarchical. This meant that as information was processed at increasingly higher echelons, it was increasingly distorted, because people had their interests, which they realised through distorting information to suit themselves. For example, they distorted information to look better or to get something and so on.

In this regard, the centre did not concentrate on information any more or rather it concentrated on wrong information. It was impossible to learn what was real because the information was passing through too many stages and at any stage the information could be distorted. The result was that it was impossible to know exactly what was true as too many interests were involved. The funny thing is the government knew there was a lot of distortion and did not trust official information even when it looked right. So the government got very suspicious

when they checked reports, which was why they used the KGB to check reports, for example. The KGB did not have any particular interest. So, reports were also distorted because of all the interests. A lot of managerial problems were becoming political problems, because different groups' interests conflicted. The interest groups competed with and contradicted each other. Centralization became impossible.

So in a sense *perestroika* was logical and historically necessary in the Marxist sense. It was morally necessary in the sense that people want change, while at the same time, the change people wanted was not possible because the population was not organised. The population did not develop its own project as an alternative to this bureaucratic structure. Restructuring was carried out by these bureaucratic interest groups and not in the interest of the people. It was in the interest of these bureaucratic interest groups, who then formed alliances with the most corrupted of the intelligence elements, the criminal elements, and the West. This was because another goal of *perestroika* was to integrate the Russian elite into the world global elite. So globalisation was something we picked up easily because that was what they wanted.

There were some attempts at an alternative. A sort of popular *perestroika* project was spontaneously forming, but it was too late, too little, and too weak. The population never managed to generate a movement, a project strong enough to be seen as a real alternative to the bureaucracy. In 1989 and into the 1990s there were two *perestroikas* (which I wrote about then). There was the *perestroika* from below and *perestroika* from above and they contradicted each other. It meant struggling. The problem was that the *perestroika* from below was defeated. The *perestroika* from above ended in what we know as the Yeltsin regime.

What is your perspective on the role of Gorbachev in all of this?

Of course one has to blame him though probably not in the same way as some orthodox people do. Gorbachev did the things he had to do in a sense. This included some things that had negative impacts on the country, but had been prepared by the previous leadership. He did what he had to do because the system was going through a certain stage and in that sense we have to see subjectively what Gorbachev thought and the objective meaning of the events. If we can blame Gorbachev for anything it is that he never reflected on his own role and the objective meaning of the process he was unleashing.

Probably, in the beginning, he had an honest wish to deliver some kind of democratic socialism. The logic of the system was moving him and his objectives in the very opposite direction. It is here we must blame him. If you are an honest socialist you have to reflect on what is going on and as a socialist he had to resist certain logical processes which he did not. Instead he went with the process. I can imagine that if socialism were taken more seriously, he would have ended up in a worse condition and sooner than he actually did. The majority of the nomenklatura (elite) wanted to get rid of the remaining socialist experience. This was what they saw as the positive part or meaning of *perestroika* and is why they supported Gorbachev at all. Gorbachev was never able to break with these people, so they used him and the democratisation for their own purposes. Gorbachev was also a very weak leader and politician. He was not courageous enough to accept the responsibility of the consequences of his own decisions. He always blamed others or the objective circumstances instead of understanding his own share of responsibility. For that we have to blame him. But we do not have to say it was because of Gorbachev's failures or decisions that the Soviet Union disintegrated. It disintegrated because of the systemic crisis.

In your writing you have grappled with how Marxism in theory and practice has addressed the question of reform versus revolution. What is your basic thesis?

The basic thesis is that there is no clear-cut line dividing revolutionary practice from reformist practice. So, in a sense, they are interconnected. What begins as revolutionary practice can be transformed into reformist practice and reformist attempts, actions, or aspirations can accumulate a certain momentum to become a revolutionary force, a revolutionary movement. A lot of great revolutionaries began wanting reforms and began with reformist slogans, but failed to achieve reforms. But through the struggle for reform they finally achieved revolution (e.g. the great French Revolution). We must not make a dogmatic or simplistic division between revolutionary approach and reformism. Second, the terms 'good' or 'bad' are inadequate because there are certain situations when reformist practices are adequate and there are also situations when revolutionary practices are adequate. We also have to think in terms of final goals of the movement and the vision of the society we are seeking to achieve and then develop the whole set of tools. There is always a dialectic - sometimes reformist tools are adequate and sometimes revolutionary tools are adequate.

This is why in different periods different leaderships and different political

organisations come to the fore. It is also why political democracy is absolutely essential for the labour movement and the masses so they can make choices themselves. The masses can also be wrong, but they have a political instinct and it is better when the masses are wrong than when the leadership is wrong. The consequences usually are worse when the masses follow the leadership than when the leadership follows the attitudes of the masses. It is true that leaders must lead the masses, but they must not lead the masses against their will. Sometimes the masses do not want to go along with the ideology of the leadership.

In that sense democracy is absolutely essential because democracy keeps some internal balance between revolutionary and reformist tendencies within the movement. That is the major thesis in my work. When I speak about tendencies there is one thing that is absolutely essential. I do not want to say some people are born revolutionaries or reformers. Even if we take the great revolutionaries we find some reformist episodes in their political practices. For example, when certain great revolutionaries are elected to parliament you will discover that he/she will have to behave in certain ways, as a reformist in a way. Similarly, a decent reformer might be forced into a situation in which there is just no choice between no action or revolutionary action. This was like your comrades in the ANC, I think. In the case of apartheid there was no reformist choice, because being denied any access to the political system meant you had to be a revolutionary. Maybe your mentality is reformist, but to achieve any reformist change you first have to go through the revolutionary struggle against the regime. Again, in that sense, it is stupid to put labels on people.

It is important for the masses to see how people behave and the masses put some kind of check on the leaders or politicians. At the same time, I totally reject gradualism, which is the stupid idea that this continuous process itself can lead us to some kind of positive transformation on the society. The balance of evidence shows that it is extremely counter-productive. By the way, the idea of evolution is not a reformist idea, but rather a conservative idea because modern conservatives do not deny the fact that society changes. They just do not want the people to change society. Rather they want the institutions to function and they want to change this process of functioning themselves. That is the kind of change conservatives expect. So in that sense we must be critical of this evolution and gradualism. On the other hand, of course, we must also be very critical of this dogmatic approach to revolution (like the idea that a revolutionary is always a revolutionary).

Many Trotskyist comrades think that everything a revolutionary does must be revolutionary. So anytime a revolutionary does anything that is not revolutionary, it is a sin. In the Stalinist tradition they did everything in a revolutionary way but at the same time they needed hypocrisy to justify themselves. So when going through certain reformist practices they pretended that they were actually revolutionary practices or they invented revolutionary justifications. We have to call a spade a spade. If a practice is reformist, then it is reformist and we do not have to be ashamed of it. Once again it does not mean that reformism is a kind of panacea. We must understand reformism to be cumulative. If it accumulates momentum, it necessarily drives us into a revolutionary confrontation with the elites. In the long run serious reform drives us to the brink where we have to confront revolutionary choices, otherwise the reform goes backwards.

Following on your thesis on the relationship between reform and revolution, some socialists in Western Europe argue that having a 35-hour working week and guaranteeing a basic income for everyone in society constitutes some form of socialism even if you have private property or private ownership of the means of production. What is your view on this?

I think that this theory is simply wrong and not logical. Once again, we achieve all the goals of socialism under capitalism; that is what it means. This is logically impossible. We have everything like socialism except private property. But why do we need private property when we have everything like socialism? What is the meaning of the private property then? What is the owner going to get from this private property if everything is arranged according to the different rule? So it is meaningless, absurd and illogical. If I were a capitalist I would disagree completely with this approach. Now, that is what happened in many social democratic experiences like Sweden and Austria. They took away many of the rights of the capitalists without taking their property. At a certain point the proprietors started retaking their control functions from all the socialised institutions and that is essentially what neo-liberalism is about. That is, the revenge of property rights against the society, which took away certain elements like control and power from the proprietors. That is why neo-liberalism is so wild; it is also revenge. It has psychological components.

Some of the theorists of this position point to rising productivity as the basis for their argument. What is your view on this?

This is wrong both theoretically and empirically. First of all it is wrong empirically. The very fact that technology now produces more does not mean there is more distribution. It does not mean there is a better chance politically or socially for redistribution. It means nothing, because, first of all, the level of productivity is not connected to the size of profit. Marx is basically right in his statement that the level of profit is declining historically. In the long run, we see in the long cycles that profit margins decline though productivity grows. The capacity of the world's markets to accept and consume the goods is always limited. Actually productivity is growing faster than the capacity of the market. Of course, there are different periods. There are periods when the productivity is growing faster and the new technologies are creating new markets. For example, the most recent case is the emergence of computers. So, while the new technologies are creating new markets, productivity generates additional profits. The growth of productivity occurs because new types of products emerge within the new markets. These markets are empty and the void is filled with the new products. It is like the Wild West in a sense, not in fighting and shooting, but in terms of a lot of space which you colonise.

There are new markets expanding and these new markets create the wrong impression that profit rates are going up and will go up inevitably and indefinitely for a whole generation. A certain level of accumulation is achieved until the markets are full and cannot expand anymore. The consumption of these products globally also cannot expand at the same time. The computer industry is facing a tremendous crisis exactly because it was accustomed to this kind of rapid expansion, of very high profit rates which were incomparable to other industries. Now they will decline to the level of the rest of the economy because their markets are full. People do not need more computers and cannot buy endlessly more computers. This market is going to decline.

Then you come to the point when the profit rates decline. The contradiction between labour and capital comes to the fore in these industries, which previously looked as if they were free of the class conflict (e.g. they were not unionised with very high upward mobility for the workers). Then they suddenly discovered that it is just another capitalist industry like any other capitalist industry. Rather than being fundamentally different, it turned out that it was just a specific period they went through. You suddenly understand that capitalism is not about profits but rather about power. It is about social power, which is achieved through profits and investments. Capitalists achieve profits not to consume, but to invest. And they need investments to keep their social power as

the ruling class. So in a sense there is no nice solution to this problem. Historically I am sure there will be compromises where capitalists accept certain power sharing deals like the one you described. These deals will never be stable and will just be temporary compromises. When fortunes shift, on either side, these compromises are no longer valid and then nationalisation would be the solution.

Although nationalisation is not necessarily going to take the same forms as it took in 1917, for example, because we now have multinational corporations operating in different countries. There are also solutions in certain cases like the possibility of nationalising multinational companies collectively. For example, a group of countries could take joint action against a particular multinational to nationalise their branches simultaneously or almost simultaneously. This would be possible through regional co-operation, for example, and multinationals cannot do anything about it. Because multinationals are rooted in a certain region, they are hooked and anchored there. They can go from say one African country to another African country or from one Latin American country to another Latin American country with similar levels of infrastructure, development, etc. They cannot simply move away from the whole region because there are reasons why they came there originally. Thus, they have to stay in the region. I do not exclude, for example, the possibility of multinationals cooperating with the governments who nationalise their branches. Why not? If there is a deal that would be better for them than the trade war with this particular country, they will accept the deal. So you must be political.

Coming back to the issue of Russian Marxism. Can you help us understand Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) and how this relates to markets and the development of the forces of production in a transition to socialism?

There is a lot of confusion about capitalism and the market. Many socialists simply say Lenin was wrong. However, let us go to the root of the issue. The root of this error is very clear: it relates to the origins of commodity production and the market which began before capitalism historically. However, these economies were partially commodity economies. In the feudal economies markets and exchange did have some space, but it probably did not dominate feudal economies. These practices were marginal in these feudal societies. Even if we take the so-called Asiatic mode of production, once again what we see is that the market and commodity production were there, but they were marginal within the framework of the system. If you start discussing it, not from the point

of view of the presence of the market or existence of the market, but from the point of whether the market was central or marginal within the system, then you suddenly come to the conclusion that under capitalism market forces were not only existing and present, but were dominant, central, and essential for the very existence of the system. They were not compensating certain weaknesses. They were central and essential to creating the system. From this perspective you can understand why Engels and partially Marx equate capitalism to the market.

From this point of view you come to the conclusion that if the market, commodity production, and these types of relations precede capitalism then you have many reasons to come to the logical conclusion that these relations can continue to exist after capitalism. They can survive after capitalism and the history of the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the Soviet Union proves this and many other things can prove it too. At the same time what must be changed in a historic and systemic sense is the rule of these factors. If you go beyond capitalism then the market factor loses its central role and becomes marginalised and the same thing can be said about commodity production. It means that commodity production continues but in general production is becoming at least partially decommodified. Not every production unit is a commodity production unit in a transition. That is the difference. The decommodified production unit is becoming increasingly important for the self-organisation of the system. So it is marginalising the commodity production system.

Some computer theorists in Russia wrote about this and stressed the importance of non-commodity factors for the very existence, very survival of the internet. If you commodify the whole process of functioning of the internet, the system collapses and will disintegrate. Just because it is one network which means there is something that unites everybody, it is the network uniting everybody, not the market space. The market space is where everybody comes independently and leaves independently. The market space can be emptied, for example, to keep the network sustainable. There should be certain factors that do depend on the interests of individual agents but the interest of the network goes beyond the sum of interests of individuals who have access to the network. So in that sense the internet shows us a certain vision of non-commodified economic structures.

If you read Lenin there is a preoccupation with broad Western themes. Yet the overall context from which he was thinking in Russia was from inside a peripheral society. So has the search in Lenin's Marxism's for a universal outlook undermined its capacity to really understand the dynamics of what was

essentially a peasant based society?

Yes and no. I can give you a very clear example. Marx agreed with the Russian Narodniks, the populists, that certain elements of the pre-capitalist society in Russia could also be the basic building bricks, which would be necessary to preserve, to build the future (e.g. the peasants' communes or the spirit of the community, which was pre-capitalist but could be an alternative to capitalist society and could become post-capitalist in turn). This definitely contradicted the kind of orthodox Marxism which Plekhanov brought to Russia. He taught many Marxists, including Lenin, partly. In that sense Lenin never agreed with Marx's standpoint. He defended Marxists even against Marx, because he was unable to agree with the fact that certain theoretical approaches, which were developed in the periphery could be more advanced, at least, in terms of the analysis they provided of a particular society. At the same time, Marx's methodology was open to Lenin's position. Lenin broadened the spectrum of Marx's research.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that in practice Lenin made the corrections and picked up a lot from socialist revolutionaries who were actually Russian populists and not Marxists. I think his political practice, his great political instinct, made him go beyond that. In this sense the framework of debate which was moved from Germany, England or France to Russia remained Western-oriented. Certain home-grown questions were Russian, which created an internal tension or conflict within the thinking of Russian Marxists. It is the problem of all peripheral societies in the sense that we accept the framework, which is generated in the West. This universalistic framework has its limits. But, on the other hand, it is extremely appealing, especially for the people in the periphery and semi-periphery, because it offers the possibility of broadening the debate and context. The problem always is how one can broaden the framework of debate and broaden this Western concept of universality to go beyond the limits of Western universalism.

This is, for example, my struggle with Western post-modernists who reject universalism on the basis that it is Western. We are not Western, but nevertheless we want universalism because we think it is a basic framework that can be enlarged or broadened and if we reject it we are doomed to become parochial and live in a narrow framework. In that sense it is very interesting that though Russian populists had very interesting insights and ideas, they were never able to develop a systematic theory. There was never any populist theory in Russia;

there were particular theories on particular issues, and hence there was a school of thought, which was actually more like a cultural trend than a school of thought in a Western sense. This was why populism was defeated in Russia. Despite the fact it had interesting intellectual insights it could not provide people with a framework, context, and serious answers to broad questions.

The answer is that you have to accept Western-made frameworks, but critically so.

Can you elaborate on the doctrine of 'socialism in one country'? And are there lessons from this for socialist strategy?

Some have argued that there are cycles of globalisation and de-globalisation in world capitalist development. I totally agree with this thesis; it is absolutely correct. In that sense globalisation is not something unique or totally new. Though of course it is a new phenomenon in the sense that globalisation as we face it now is different from internationalisation cycles of capital (e.g. 16th and 17th century early capitalist economy or in the imperialist economy at the beginning of the 20th century). In that sense it is new, but it is not new in the sense that nothing similar ever happened. If we see this as a cyclical process then we can see that after the globalisation period there will be a de-globalisation period as well, which probably will not reverse everything that happened during the globalisation period, but the questions and alternatives will be reformulated.

Globalisation as a cyclical and a reversible process is one thing we have to consider in relation to the socialist movement. We see that more internationalist trends in the socialist movement were dominating in the periods when cycles of expansion of the capitalist system were just beginning. When the expansion achieved a certain intensity, which was probably also the beginning of reversal socialists tended to start thinking more nationally. Put differently, when internationalization reaches a high point and starts a process of reversal this is when the socialist movement tends to be inward looking.

In this sense Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country' and Bukharin's theories were not just an invention of one or two heads. Stalin's theory came from the experience of de-internationalisation of the world economy after the First World War. This de-internationalisation was very different from the internationalization you saw at the beginning of the 20th century. One of the elements of this early 20th century internationalisation of capitalists was the Anglo-Boer War, when the

Germans trained Boer armies to fight the British and test their military technologies in Africa in order to prepare for war in Europe 14 years later. I have read German Generals' memoirs and they state it very clearly. One General wrote a very interesting paragraph on the Boer War in which he said, 'we Germans are so naïve because we trained the Boers. We sent our best weapons to them and we trained them to get this kind of experience in new warfare. The British had very brave soldiers who were running against the trenches, but Boers had good German rifles wiping them out. And we did all that. Then finally, in 1914, the Boers fought on the British side against us and they had all this military knowledge and competence which we invested in them.' So, this General was very aggrieved by this. It gives you an idea of how interlinked everything was in the sense that everything was already part of a system.

So, it was not just a stupid Soviet idea of socialism in one country, but it was the general de-internationalisation of the world system and the world economy, of which the Soviet Union was just one element. The periods of de-internationalisation and de-globalisation were more favourable for national socialist projects, while the periods of greater globalisation raises questions around the necessity of global socialist alternatives or a New World Economic order. Of course, in reality the global and national are inter-linked. Thus, there are certain socialist projects that are based in a single country, and on the other hand, we must understand that socialism as a system will be a world system. In that sense every experience of a country will be a limited experience unless it expands and becomes part of global transformation. Otherwise, of course, it is doomed to either retreat into some kind of reformist experience or to degenerate like in the Soviet Union.

In a more recent contribution you have put forward an argument to reclaim the state. Can you expand on what you mean by this?

I mean two things. First, the neo-liberal theory of the powerless state is simply wrong and it is even wrong in capitalist terms. The capitalist state is not powerless. Every time you challenge the capitalist system, you suddenly discover the state is not powerless. You discover it is quite powerful. It is argued that it is powerless when referring to welfare, redistribution, or exchange controls that favour the population and so on. But it is extremely powerful when it comes to the point of suppressing the resistance of the population to liberalisation, for example.

The second aspect to this is how neoliberals have been presenting deregulation as amounting to a weak or limited state. We must understand how deregulation works to understand that it is also a form of interventionism which also requires a powerful state. Every act of deregulation is an act of the state. Deregulation is also a sort of state policy which needs exactly as much interventionism as regulation. More than that, deregulation is a constant process. You can never find a country that just deregulated once and then stopped deregulating. You will have to deregulate everyday and you will have to put as much effort into daily deregulation as you put into daily regulation. Whether low or high tariffs, it does not matter from the point of view of interventionism. It does not matter because you still need at least as many bureaucrats working on daily issues whether there is low or high tariffs, or low or high taxes.

Neo-liberals turn deregulation into a self-perpetuating process. Once you deregulate something you suddenly discover that you have to deregulate something else and when you deregulate something else you discover there are still more things to deregulate. Why? It is due to the contradiction that deregulation needs constant government intervention on every single issue that the government faces. Then you suddenly understand that the neo-liberal globalisation project is completely rooted within the system of the bourgeois state. It needs the daily presence of the state in almost every field to protect it, run it, and to prevent spontaneous deregulation from below, which happened in the case of Russia. A very interesting Russian economist who is a rightwing Keynesian, made a very interesting point. He said regulation is the natural state of things and if the state does not regulate either society regulates itself or crime regulates the society. The Mafia will do the functions of the state because regulation is something every economy and market needs. The structures will disintegrate without regulation. It is like leaving traffic unregulated. If we remove the traffic police from all the roads either there will be accidents everywhere or the drivers themselves will find a way to regulate or somebody else will regulate instead of the police.

Thus, regulation is as natural for the capitalist economy as the market. In the long run the market cannot be stabilised and function without a whole set of rules. But to ensure that every element of the system abides by these rules, a great deal of state regulation is required. Now, if the state is not powerless in capitalist terms, then the state will not be powerless in socialist terms. So the socialists can use the state for their purposes. They can use public property, taxation and all the other tools of the state for their purposes. Of course, they

have to reformulate their policies because the times change. Instead of seeing it as just power, they have to think of how to make the state efficient in the current conditions.

What would reclaiming the state mean in Russia?

In Russia reclaiming the state is both easier and harder. It is very easy intellectually because it is easy to understand what is to be done and there is little to debate. It is much harder politically because the political forces which are needed to implement the change (i.e. the existent left) are not able to implement anything. Intellectually there are two important issues. First, Russia has a comprador oligarchy which presides over the whole economy and controls most property in the country and is totally interconnected with the state. The state both protects and subsidises it. It is a specific system in terms of which profits are prioritised but losses are socialised. While this is the logic of modern capitalism, in Russia this is extreme. Second, the state props up this oligarchy with massive subsidies. So instead of re-investment by the oligarchs the state is heavily subsidising the private sector in Russia. At the same time, the owners of these privatised companies are getting richer and richer because they disinvest from the enterprises.

The answer to this situation is simple. You have to nationalise gas and oil industries, natural resources, infrastructure facilities and the banking system. You also have to concentrate the public sector effort to develop of hi-tech industries in an ecologically friendly direction. These hi-tech industries could be both export-orientated and job-generating. And they must be oriented towards cooperation with the developing world rather than the West. This is essential.

What are the challenges facing the left in Russia?

The problem we are facing is the structure of political power in the country and the level of co-optation into the system developed by Yeltsin. Yeltsin is now almost absent from the political process, but the system is there. Even though we have a sort of centre-left government it is also co-opted within this system. You do not want to blame them because there are many people who are doing their best within the given framework, but we have to change the framework. We have to go beyond the structures we inherited from Yeltsin's period. Then you discover many of the so-called leftwing politicians are not on your side, but are actually a major obstacle because their power and influence is derived from this

system and they do not want to lose it. They do not want to face change though they probably would not lose in the long run. Change is uncomfortable. So instead of going through it they try to compensate for the weakness of their actions with nationalist rhetoric.

That is why Russian leftists, at least at the level of leadership, became very nationalist and anti-left in terms of the ideologies it propagates. When you become a nationalist you also have to generate a certain system of views, which ultimately ends up rejecting Leninism, Marxism and, in the long run, socialism in the Marxist sense. They do not speak about the masses or the working class, but about the consolidation of the elites and society. While people are hungry and starving they do not want consolidation, but rather want to punish the bad guys and want dramatic change. Consolidation will not allow dramatic change. The space for compromise is shrinking; socially, economically, and politically. I think in the coming year there will be a dramatic crisis within the official left because the rank and file is fed up. There will probably be some kind of revolt from the rank and file and voters. The power base of the Communist Party will revolt. Whether that will lead to the emergence of a new leftwing party or to another crisis of the Russian political system and to some kind of authoritarian solution remains to be seen.

Is there a prospect for a global response of the left to the global capitalist crisis? What forms would the response take?

There are different ways to respond. First of all there is space and responses are happening. Ironically we just do not understand the importance of certain events. For example, the Zapatista action in Chiapas, Mexico, was a really important element of the global response because it was a local action that was publicised globally and was making a global political impact. However, it does not mean you have to follow this mantra of act and think globally, which I think is wrong. For example, in the practice of green parties global thinking is totally disconnected from local action. The problem is not whether you think globally or how you act locally, but how to connect local action to the global process. That is where the problem is. You can think very locally but can still connect your local action to some global process. The Zapatista leader, Commandant Marcos, did this. He made Zapatistas into a global fashion though he never left Chiapas (he stayed in the mountains in Chiapas), but still the whole world looked at Chiapas. We have to think more about Zapatistas not in the sense of a military action, but as Commandant Marcos speaks about it, civic Zapatistas as

an alternative to military Zapatista. It can take different forms. This is a kind of action that is new.

Second, whatever the level of class struggle, people must succeed. It is like what Napoleon said: 'One has to go there to encourage the troops; some little advances here and there must be achieved every day. There will be little ambushes here and there, but every day a certain success must be achieved, however small. This is important in order for the troops not to feel as if they are losing'. The labour movement was very demoralised because it had one defeated strike after another, one lost election after another, etc. The left and the labour movement must concentrate on finding the spots where they have very high chances of winning. These might be very minor spots of minor importance, but should present high chances of winning. They should concentrate a great deal of effort in these spots to achieve victory and publicise it in a propagandistic way by exaggerating the importance of it and sending the message that we can defeat them and be on the winning side.

Multinational corporations are extremely vulnerable. For example, the United Parcel Services strike in the United States was based on the understanding of how the corporation actually functioned. There were units that were loss-making and units that were profit-making. The union acted in such a way that profit-making structures stopped operating, while loss-making units continued, which was a catastrophe for the company. Of course that was a very particular case in which the profit-making units and the loss-making units were literally interconnected. If you study the operation of every multinational you will find dozens of these minor weaknesses. The unions never paid any attention to them and never gave special effort to investigating where the weak and vulnerable spots in multinationals are. We need a global effort coordinated by trade unions to investigate each company and inform people where multinationals are strong and weak. We have to know our enemy and where the weaknesses are.

The final thing is that some kind of political international is needed and trade unions can be essential in this case. Russian trade unions are down, but will revive sooner or later. But in Brazil, South Africa, France and Germany trade unions are very much alive. Even in the United States there are interesting processes going on. Trade unions can probably launch some cooperation projects which can be broadened to parties. Then parties can use different structures that already exist (e.g. the Sao Paulo Forum is one opportunity that could be broadened to Africa, Europe and the whole world). Though this would

require redefining the project. There are also observers in the socialist international who are not social democrats. There could be a certain caucus of observers of the socialist international working together. For example, there is a western European coordination of leftwing parties (i.e. to the left of social democracy), which is arising through the European parliament. The question is how to put all these elements together.

There are, by the way, certain remnants of the communist international because there are communist parties which still exist and this brings ties and networks. People know each other from previous communist party conferences in Moscow and elsewhere. They still have the links. We do not have to revive the old communist international because it was not a very good thing from the very beginning (e.g. the committee structures were very authoritarian), but the historic experience should not be thrown away.

What in your opinion are the prospects and challenges for socialism in the 21st century?

When you came to Moscow you met people who went through the experience of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Soviet communist ideology, yet still they were very interested to learn from South African communists coming to Russia about your ideas of socialism. It means that socialist ideas are very much alive, not just in this country but around the world.

I think we cannot speak about the next century. It is too much. We will not survive that long anyway. I think socialism as a transformation process is going to come back with a vengeance and quite soon. I am not saying in the short run we will achieve some kind of socialist world system. However, there are some important mid-term prospects for socialist transformation.

First, we will see the reversal of neo-liberalism as the dominant hegemonic ideological system. The neo-liberal type of capitalism is already in a crisis and we will see the reverse of this kind of capitalist framework. If neo-liberalism is going to be reshaped or dismantled then the question is what is going to happen to capitalism? I do not want to say it is going to die but, when previous globalisations were in crisis like in the Great Depression period, what came out was not simply a new brand of capitalism but a brand of capitalism heavily dependent on certain elements of socialism, which were built into the system to allow the system to survive the crisis. Even if we get a new brand of capitalism

after this crisis one of the possibilities is that it would need even more socialist adjustments and socialist additions to survive. In that sense it would be a very progressive phenomenon and a very important stage of transformation.

Second, de-globalisation is going to start around the beginning of the 21st century. Once again without rejecting a whole structural change that happens with the globalisation period but some de-globalisation is going to happen. More national-oriented development is going to be seen in the next 10 to 20 years, which will reopen possibilities for new socialist experiments in countries. Again, this leads to the question of how to coordinate these social experiments, either reformist or revolutionary experiences, in order to go beyond national models. That is the second question.

The third question is that I think socialism is going to come back as a very important school of thought. It will emerge through resistance to the commodifying logic of neoliberalism. Capitalism was never pure and could not be pure, because a system based on exchange and commodities means that if it were a pure commodity exchange system it would disintegrate very quickly because human relations cannot be reduced to commodity exchange. That means a pure capitalist system needed certain non-market, non-commercial, and non-commodity factors to keep society together. Even Max Weber's famous Protestant ethic was in a sense based on the non-commercial and non-commodity factors of capitalism. It supported but also restricted capitalism to a certain extent. However, neo-liberalism came to a new extreme in terms of rejecting everything that was not commercial and not market place-oriented. It finally came to the point when it rejected the very decency of culture. Ironically neo-liberalism is also very anti-religious because money will never be religion. The religion of money will never be religion.

In that sense religion is under tremendous threat from neo-liberalism. This is why fundamentalists emerge - Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc. The very existence of religion is threatened by neo-liberalism in such a way that it was never threatened by communists. Communists never undermined the human possibility in believing in God; they destroyed churches but that is secondary. Churches can be destroyed, but people can still pray at home or underground. Communists never created conditions where people's minds were organised in such a way that they could not pray, whereas neoliberal logic regards prayer as being about money. That is, how much money am I going to get today if I pray? With this logic religion is not possible. Whereas if the question is how many years I will

get in prison for praying in public, then your thinking is religious. So in that sense religion will be a tremendous backlash against neo-liberalism.

All these factors which are very essential for human beings (e.g., love, family relations, everything that is not commercial) will be factors of resistance. I think there will be a tremendous comeback of all these factors which, in the long run, will determine the defeat both of neo-liberalism and capitalism as a system.

Is It All The Same ?

Museum in slumber.

Moscow dressed in frosty white
Exuding a shimmering beauty.

Mayakovsky stood tall
but his vision was blocked
by Fast Food Chicken.

Icons of the Revolution
aesthetic architecture
disappearing in the predatory market.

From Johannesburg to Sao Paulo
New York to Tokyo
Delhi to Stockholm
Moscow to ...

All being submerged in a bill board landscape.



CHAPTER NINE

Orjan Sverdberg

International Secretary of the Swedish Left Party

What were the influences on your life that led to your involvement in socialist politics?

I was working politically in 1972 and at that time the major issue was the Vietnam Movement. I was involved in this movement for several reasons. First, the welfare state in Sweden cast a fog over class distinctions, but in Vietnam we could see how a powerful force was exploiting the weak in brutal and unjust ways. Suddenly the contradiction between strong and weak was very clear. There was a big country violating a small country, a blatant injustice, which led me into the Vietnam Movement.

Secondly, this combined with my own working-class background, which gave me an emotional view on the class distinction and not a politically conscious view. Put simply, all this means is that we had to 'go abroad' to see class distinction in our own society. In the end my involvement led to a consciousness around these questions. After the Vietnam Movement, which started in Sweden in 1965, and the 1968 Paris student movement new ideas on socialism came to Sweden in the early 1970s. Various socialist groups came into existence.

What is your role currently in the Left Party?

For the past two-and-a-half years I have been working as international secretary. Before that I was working in local politics in the south of Sweden, but international politics has always been one of my areas of interest. I was working with international questions even in the 1980s through the peace movement.

Can you give us a brief historical background to the Left Party?

The Left Party was established in May 1917, between the two Russian Revolutions (the February and October Revolutions). The founding of the Left Party was the result of internal policy struggles and conflicts within the Swedish working-class movement. When the party was established the base for the party was in the youth organisation, which left the Social Democratic Party. Together with 10 or 15 parliamentarians and other people in high places in the Social

Democratic Party, they formed the Left Social Democratic Party in 1917. That party existed until 1921 and then it changed its name to the Swedish Communist Party and became a member the Third International. As a result it adopted the theses of the Third International which were written by Lenin.

From 1921 until 1967 the party was called the Swedish Communist Party, but in 1967 we changed the name of the party to the Left Party Communists. This was the result of an internal ideological struggle and fight within the party. The main question at that time was the relationship with the Soviet Union. One can say, with historical hindsight, that we were the first Euro-Communist Party in Europe because in 1964 a new group came into the leadership of the party, which was called the Modernists. Their idea was that we could never create a socialist society if we always looked to the Soviet Union. We had to create a socialist society based on the Swedish political situation, on Swedish democratic traditions and so on. At that point, we started our revision and the party tried to define its own way. As a result of this, when the Soviet Union occupied Czechoslovakia in 1968, our party leader was the first to condemn it in Sweden. He went on radio two or three hours after the occupation and said it was wrong and that we were against it. In addition, the party changed its name in 1967 because in the party we did not only have communists. There were people from other theoretical backgrounds and it was felt that they could enrich the party, given that some of them had good ideas. So changing the name opened the party to include others on the left. The party has continued this transformation and change in its ideology.

In 1990 the party changed its name again and took out the word 'communist'. This change resulted from changes in Eastern Europe (e.g. the Berlin Wall went down and the Soviet Union collapsed). Also, the word 'communist' has a bad connotation in Sweden because the political right succeeded in connecting the word 'communism' to Stalinism, concentration camps, the liquidation of people and so on. So, at that time it was almost impossible to use the word or to say, 'I am a communist.' But nonetheless a lot of people in the party still recognise themselves as communists. I consider myself to be a Marxist, which is a better description of my political standpoint. During the last two or three years the attitude towards the word 'communist' has changed.

Our party has been in parliament since its establishment and our best election prior to the recent one was just after the War in 1946. The Russians had a great deal of credibility due to the fact they broke the back of the Nazis. This gave us a

good opportunity to draw advantage from that situation. Also, during the 1920s and 1930s, the party succeeded in doing some good work amongst the working class, including political work in factories, in municipal areas and various regions. In 1946, in municipal and national elections we did very well. We actually got 11% of the votes and this was just immediately after the Second World War. Then the Cold War followed and created a lot of problems for us because the whole bourgeoisie and even the Social Democratic Party were fighting back. They threw us out from everywhere (from trade unions, municipal governments and so on). After the events in Hungary in 1956, we really had a problematic time because we were more or less considered traitors to our own country.

In the 1960s things changed because there was a socialist left wave all over Western Europe. 1968 was just the tip of the iceberg so to speak; it was the manifestation of what had gone on since the beginning of the 1960s in Europe, in Sweden and in the left more broadly. Many groups were born during 1968 (e.g., Maoist, Trotskyist, etc.). In the 1970s these movements reached their peak and their destruction. By the end of the 1970s they were almost wiped out, very few existed and the final breakdown came at the end of the decade. After that the only serious alternative, in terms of the left, was the Left Party.

During the 1980s two new movements were born in Sweden: one on environmental issues and the other the peace movement. When it comes to the peace movement most would say it started with the deployment of Pershing II missiles by NATO. This created a lot of resistance all over Europe as well as Sweden. The party was involved in this movement, but it did not have a strong influence on the movement due to the fact, in my opinion, that their analysis of the movement was bad. The party did not understand the orientation of these movements. That meant we were a little marginalised in the peace movement. I came from a different point of view at that time because I was not a member of the party during the 1980s, but was very active in the peace and the environmental movements.

Now, this has changed. Today in Sweden there are three major radical parties or forces asserting the environmental issue. There is the environmental movement which includes a whole range of different organisations (from scouts to governmental bodies to NGOs and so on). They have a big impact on people's everyday views on the environmental question. They say this is not a question of political parties, but rather a question of our survival. Then there is the Green

Party, which is very important in these matters. And then, of course, there is the Left Party. We describe ourselves as a Red/Green Party, which means the environment is one of the most important questions we have to deal with. When it comes to the peace movement, it peaked in the 1980s. Today most of these organisations are very small and have declined. The party has a lot of members working in all these movements. If we look at the ideological development of the party, one can say since the 1960s there has been a steady evaluation of the policy of the party and many changes have been put into place during these years.

While you have talked about disengaging from Stalinism what has really emerged in the party?

This relates directly to evaluating the Soviet experience, which is the main question around which all others pivot. In other words, it is the headline for different types of questions. For instance: What about democracy in these Soviet states? What about environmental questions? What about the place of a humanism? One of the questions which we only dealt with in 1993, when we got a new programme from bottom up, was the question of political pluralism inside the party and in society. That means before 1993 the party had not accepted the parliamentary system and form of democracy. This is a sign of ideological weakness and a very undialectical way of seeing how contradictions develop in society. My point of view is that if you are a socialist and believe in the ideas of Marx and other thinkers, you should not be afraid of taking the fight on with other ideologies. You should rely on the strength and power of your ideology, otherwise it would be meaningless. You cannot prohibit or forbid a pluralistic and dialectical way of dealing with differences. Now, this question has been in the party since the 1950s and all through the sixties and now it is in the party programme. We are saying we believe in a pluralistic political system because the dynamics of a society can never be stopped. It has to be open and if you have a socialist idea then your idea should be the one that wins through democratic engagement. You do not impose it by violence. This is one of the most important conclusions the party has drawn from this history.

Now coming back to our evaluation of the Soviet Union. What kind of society was it? How did it change? There are different views on these questions. My view is that the Russian Revolution was a coup d'etat because it was a very small group that took power in a historical situation in Russia when it was possible to Do it. This was the same situation in France during the French Revolution. What

we actually got was a situation where historical actors did what the bourgeoisie did in France, namely modernise Russian society. Russian society at this time did not really have a bourgeois class. The bourgeoisie was very small and did not have the capacity to carry out the modernisation of Russia. The majority of the people were peasants (about 80 to 85% of the population). The left (or the socialists) were organised in various political groupings, including the Bolsheviks. The question is whether this was a society ready to go over to socialism. My answer is no, because I do not believe in Lenin's idea that you can build socialism in the weakest link in the imperialist chain.

Lenin's view is contrary to Marx's vision that a society had to go through certain stages of transformation before it could march to socialism and communism. In other words, to create a socialist society we need to have a strong modernisation of society. Further, Marx said socialism can never come to any country unless we have capitalism all over the world. I do not want to be rigid in my political views, but we are seeing some of these things occurring with globalisation. At the time of the Russian Revolution that society was not in a position to develop socialism. It was impossible to do it but yet they persisted with the idea of 'socialism in one country'. This question has always been on the agenda of the party. Today most people in the party interested in ideological questions will share with you the view I am presenting. We have to be cautious about declaring a society socialist and this means we are very careful in terms of our international contacts.

The Left Party is located within the developed West, in this case Sweden, which is one of the most developed societies in the world. What is your strategic approach to the construction of socialism in this context?

First of all we need to understand the position we are in today, both politically and ideologically. If we concentrate on the political situation in the country up until the 1980s we had a sort of left wave in the country. Since then we have a strong right wave with the neo-liberal policy and so on. This created a very critical situation for the party. Therefore the first thing for the party is to establish a counter-power to this neo-liberal wave of attacks on the welfare state. This is the first thing we need to do. We are trying to get into a position to create such a platform. We are not there yet but we are on the road to it. The last election did precisely that; we went from 6.2% to 12%. We doubled our support and we did it on every level in the country local, regional and national. In some parts of the country in local elections we took as much as 48% to 49% of the vote, which

means we are the majority and are ruling these municipalities. In other parts, where we have been very weak ever since we were established (e.g. the South of Sweden), we had a breakthrough in support. Before the recent election we had no parliamentarian that came from the south and now we have eight.

By saying this, we are trying to create a platform to take up the discussion in a serious way, like we did in the 1970s. If we want to change society in a socialist direction, it is not enough just to be the Left Party. We need a lot of other movements with us. There are three or four main movements-the trade unions, women's, and environmental movements-all of which are very important and we need them. We have to reach some consensus with them politically speaking, but this does not mean we want them to take over our policy and party programme. They have their own questions and ways of dealing with issues. Inside the trade unions we have a better position than we have had in a very long time. Previously we were heavily marginalised by the trade unions. They actually threw us out from the boards, executives, and every institution of policy. During the last six to eight years many within the unions have realised their policy is very close to our policy and their attitudes are changing. This is not happening with the leadership, but at regional and local levels. Today, we have a number of people in the unions at various levels and in a few unions (e.g. the transport union) we have national-level support. The attitude is changing slowly and the change is coming from the bottom, while the top leadership is still married to the Social Democrats. Many of the leaders at the top of the unions are also leaders in the Social Democratic Party or have close connections. But these ties have been cracking over the past eight years as the Social Democrats have moved to the centre, which has meant further cut-backs in the social wage, something the unions have difficulties accepting.

To form this kind of networking movement (not official) we are moving towards, we need to position ourselves. This has to be done in a complex situation and includes a big discussion on the European Union. The negative impact of the conversion demands of the European Union on Swedish society have to be engaged with. This means there would be limits on the welfare state (e.g. the public sector should not be too big and so on) which we do not accept. The monetary union is coming up and we need to create networking relationships against the monetary union. If the monetary union is achieved in Sweden it would have negative consequences for socialism. That is, the door would be closed on this question for a long time and therefore we have to fight back now.

Of course there is the other context of the Third World, which is a growing issue in the party. For example, in a municipal area in the south of Sweden an airport started chartered flights to Turkey. We are clear on fighting against this because Turkey is a military state which suppresses the Kurdish people. We cannot accept this and are clear on fighting against this. So, international questions are on the table even at a local level, because they have a strong influence on everyday life. Thus the left has to take up these questions, especially if you take it in the context of globalisation. Because capital's way of working with this is very smart, we have to fight back at every level. Slowly the party is realising we have to be involved in international questions and co-operation with other parts of the world. So this is one of the tendencies you will see if we grow in the coming years. This is the background.

Can you relate this to your current programme, particularly its thrust or main programmatic planks that are relevant to this?

The party has four basic pillars which are important for these discussions. First, the Left Party believes in socialism and accepts the ideas of Marx and Engels. Second, we are a feminist party and we believe in equality. Third, we are an ecological party. And finally, we are a party that strongly believes in international solidarity. These are the four main pillars, but two are new themes (the women's question and ecology) resulting from developments over the past 25 years. What we are saying in our programme is yes, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are important, but they could not foresee what would happen in the future and hence it is not enough to rely only on the ideas of Marx and Engels when it comes to the new context, particularly questions of feminism and ecology. This means we have to add left ideas to these questions, which is what we did in the programme. So these four pillars fit appropriately into the new situation because they are on the agenda every time and everywhere. They are actually one of the main reasons why we had such a good outcome in the elections, because they reflect what is going on in Swedish society.

At the level of the concrete, what would be a set of demands associated with the feminist and the ecological pillars? What is the party articulating on these issues within Swedish society?

A reduction in working time is one of the main reforms we have to deal with from different perspectives. We argue that it is important to have a six-hour working day in this situation. The basis for this is an analysis of capitalist

society. In the future we cannot reach a situation where 90 or 95% of the population is working eight hours because of the development in capitalist society. It is important to demand to work six hours now, because it is not necessary to work eight hours. From a socialist point of view this issue is important. From a feminist view it is also important for several reasons. First of all, by European standards we have high unemployment in Sweden, which is about 10%. One of the cut-backs in the welfare state is the public sector, which was hit very hard as were women in this instance. This means we have a very large number of unemployed women. By reducing working time to six hours, one new job for every three would be created, which means about 150 000 new jobs in total would be created. In the Swedish situation this is a huge amount of work. A reduction in working time also gives men time to share responsibilities in the home and in the family. We believe this is very good for society. Here, then, there is also the big question of equality.

With the ecological pillar, we are firstly calling for the shut-down of our nuclear plants. One of the big questions for the past 20 years has been the issue of the 12 plants we have. In 1980 we had a referendum on this question and the result was we should shut them all down. Today this is not a realistic view, but there is a consensus in parliament to at least shut down one of the nuclear plants. We started on this road to shut down nuclear plants because they are far too dangerous to deal with. We have seen the dangers through the human factor in Chernobyl and other places. Then we also have a headline for the environmental question: sustainable development. This is also an international question because 20% of world's population uses about 80% of earth's resources. This is an inequality we do not accept. Secondly, we want to leave to the future generation a world that is not polluted and destroyed. This is why we talk about a sustainable society and development, which simply means what we take from nature we should also give back. This is the main idea and applies at every level (from the paper you are using to nuclear issues) and requires a revolution in everyday life. This is probably the hardest thing to do, to change people's common ways of doing things and to change them in an environmentally friendly direction.

In the party's theoretical clarification on Lenin it reached a conclusion that disagrees with Lenin's idea that socialism should be posed in the weak link in the imperialist chain. So how does the Left Party view Third World socialist breakthroughs and societies like Cuba?

When it comes to international perspectives, the road to socialism in different parts of the world has to recognise there are different possibilities. The basic context should always be one's society, particularly its political and cultural traditions, which differ very much. That means we do not have one socialism. We have many types of socialism and different solutions to socialist questions. For instance, if we take up the question of Cuba, which is a very sensitive question to take up with the Latin Americans, the revolution was okay but the connection with the Soviet Union was not okay because that created a very bad situation for them especially when the Soviet Union collapsed. This is the one thing. The other issue is the question of pluralism in Cuban society. What the Left Party sees is a lack of democracy in that society. Pluralism is essential in order to have a serious discussion in society. I will add a little about South Africa too. The Communist Party there has historically committed itself to the eradication of apartheid. This was very smart and was backed up by a smart analysis. We do not have an apartheid system in Sweden and that means we have to go a different way than in South Africa. If we look at Turkey, the left in Turkey should eradicate their own 'apartheid systems' before they start discussing the road to socialism.

What are the lessons from your recent electoral success and how do you deal with party representatives in the government?

Very briefly, there are two or three important factors behind our success in the election. First is the question of the development of society. The people in our society showed very clearly in the election they do not want neo-liberalism. They still believe in the welfare state and they want a government that works in the direction of the welfare state. That is the basic answer from the voters. Secondly, very early in our campaign we came out against neo-liberalism and for the working people; from the beginning of the campaign we put these issues on the agenda. We were regularly on television and we broke into the mainstream discussion on the election. The third factor that worked in our favour was the development inside the Social Democratic Party. The leadership went to the centre, but the base did not. This created a conflict inside the Social Democratic Party and voters moved over to us, especially within the most important group (those 55 and older). These three factors - the development within society, our capacity to pose the relevant questions to society, and the Social Democrat's move to the centre, politically speaking created the basis for our success in the election.

When it comes to the parliamentary question it is a very delicate one and relates directly to where we put our energies and force in society. We still believe it is important to work through parliament to move society in the direction we want it to move, but the movement outside is also important. Here we have big problems because we are quite weak within these movements. In the trade unions, environmental movement and so on, we are there but not working enough. There is a risk that we are becoming a parliamentary party. We have to see the relationship with all of this. It is an ongoing discussion and is even happening now after the election. At the national parliament level we went from 22 to 43, almost doubling our representation. At national parliament level there is no problem dealing with these questions because their work is so defined and clear.

Do they have a caucus that accounts to the party? How does accountability work in practice?

The ruling body of the party is the national executive and they stand above the parliamentary group. All have to work in line with that and the party programme. But there is a lot of discussion on their role because sometimes we do feel they are working against the party programme. Normally, the national parliamentary group does stand a little to the right of the national executive. The party does change once in parliament and you need a corrective body to deal with this situation. We have seen this and it is very clear. Locally and regionally there is a much stronger connection between non-parliamentarian and parliamentary groups. Very often the questions dealt with in a municipal parliament are about schools, roads, healthcare and so on. In addition, issues and groups outside parliament, but within the party, are also dealt with at this level. For instance, protesting to close down a school is certainly to be on the agenda of the provincial parliament and also in municipal government. The connections here are more natural. The regional level can be a bit more difficult because the main responsibility is healthcare. Protest and resistance issues do emerge around healthcare and healthcare policy is the big question now.

Tell us about the General Secretary of the party and how she relates to the wider leadership collective within the party?

The fact that we have a woman as the leader of our party proves the expression of struggle within the party on the feminism question and hence we succeeded in putting a woman at the head of the party. The most important thing for her is to be

at the forefront of modernising the party. She introduced some very good ideas into the party. For instance, during the election campaign we had a slogan 'Change in society starts at the kitchen table.' During the campaign she had a kitchen table with her and people sat down at this typically classic Swedish kitchen table and asked her questions. Our General Secretary's most important capacity is in the field of language because she speaks in a way that everybody can understand. It is not big rhetoric, but rather she tries to relate our message to normal, everyday life situations. That was important in the election. So she has a strong urge to modernise the party, talks in a language people like, and is essentially one of the few people that the people like because she has a warm heart. This is important because others have a bureaucratic attitude and are very stiff types.

The Swedish labour movement had a major impact on the developmental model that emerged in Sweden since the Second World War. Radical proposals that have had a socialising logic came out of this movement like the Meidner Plan. What has been the historical response of the Left Party to these developments within the Swedish working class?

We have been part of all these suggestions and changes in the society since World War II. Many in the trade unions try to take that honour away from us. The Left Party has been one of the parties that has been a major force and has also contributed to the development of the welfare state. Many of these ideas came out of discussions inside the Left Party, in the trade unions, and Social Democrats. Many times we supported these ideas because they have been good ideas.

The welfare state and labour market gains of the Swedish labour movement are coming under attack by neo-liberalism in Sweden. Do you think the working class has been finally defeated in Sweden?

No! No! The working class is not defeated. Neo-liberal policies have been resisted by the working class in Sweden because they see them very clearly in everyday life. If a worker lost his/her job he/she knows it is because the government is putting out a neo-liberal policy. Then, of course, one starts to fight back. The election result was a very clear answer to that. The working class was saying no, and its enough now.

The Left Party is trying to advance socialism in a country with a history of red baiting. Do you think red baiting will rear its head again once the party starts growing in strength?

It has already started. The demands from the bourgeois parties are about investigating the 'crimes' of the communists. The attack against us has already started and it will increase. If we do better in the next election I can assure you the big companies and others will start to fight back. Organising, growing in strength, and preparing for the next step in the struggle are essential. A truth commission is coming now. Ever since the 1930s there has been persecution of communists by the security police and we have fought for one-and-a-half years to have this truth commission taken up. And finally, now, the government has accepted.

What are the future prospects of socialism in the 21st century?

I think it is becoming clearer and clearer that the possibilities for socialism are growing rapidly. Globalisation is actually classical imperialism, although it is much faster, but it also creates resistance and this resistance will rapidly grow. Nothing else is possible because neo-liberalism and globalisation are so offensive to people's common sense. Therefore our future lies in socialist ideas combined with ideas of feminism and ecology. Socialism has to be developed theoretically by all these other currents of thought.

Rosa Luxemburg

Gem of the working class
sparkling militant truth
murdered by barbarism.

Yet, shining bright
in innocent hearts
in toiling hands.

Unforgettable.
Revolutionary.



CHAPTER TEN

Wolfgang Gherkhe

*Former Vice-Chairperson of Party for Democratic Socialism and
Vice Chair of Parliamentary Group*

What were the influences on your life that led to your involvement in leftwing politics?

This is a very long history. In 1961 I became a member of the Communist Party which was legal at that time. My motivation for joining has always been more justice for people. I know Marx mocked this word 'justice'. It was too abstract with too much emphasis on morals and too little science in it. But I have not found a better word to describe this. I was interested in and attracted to Marxism. It was intellectually fun to be in this movement. If one is in a leftwing tradition for a long time, it is important to ask oneself based on the ideas and theory what has changed. This is a permanent relationship between continuity and rupture and both are important.

You are involved in the Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS)? Could you give us some insight into your involvement?

I was vice-chairman of the party until two weeks ago. At this last Congress I was not a candidate anymore, because I have been given a new task. In the PDS I have been especially engaged in alliances of the party, in strategic and tactical party work, and in trade union work. I am now vice chair of our parliamentary group (Bundestag group). In the presidium of this group I am responsible for foreign politics; and especially I am the spokesman on foreign policy issues. For the first time in 37 years I do not have any party posts.

Could you give us your understanding of Stalinism as a phenomenon? What were the implications of this phenomenon in the East, in the German Democratic Republic?

I think there has already been very broad research work done on this phenomenon. I should say I do not like this word 'phenomenon'. Phenomena are things you cannot describe very exactly. It is always a danger to call something Stalinism and not to define it. I think that Stalinism was a very peculiar system of power, which was founded on a vulgar understanding of Marx's ideas. I should describe some of those structures.

Marx and Engels, but not so much Lenin, started from the idea that when the communists come to power and a socialist society develops the significance of the state would diminish in this process. That is to say, more and more tasks are solved outside the state in civil society. But Stalinism brought a situation where more and more mechanisms of power were transferred to the state. More mechanisms of power were incorporated into the state and in the end all mechanisms of regulating problems in the family and the private lives of people have become a matter of the state. That is to say, this is a very totalitarian idea of a society. Everything that people said, did, and thought was regulated by the state. That is, everything was meant to be realised and implemented by the state. The consequence was the state took total control of the members of society. This is one of the deepest ruptures with a genuine Marxist theory of the state.

A second structural problem of Stalinism relates to taking power and constructing socialism in one country. Stalin developed this emphasis on developing socialism in one country which completely rejected the strategic idea that socialism in the Soviet Union could only advance if revolutionary breakthroughs happened in other countries, particularly the West. Because of the doctrine of socialism in one country all socialist forces were now tied to and subordinated to the Soviet Union. All revolutionary movements were subsequently analysed in terms of the criteria of whether or not they were good for the Soviet Union. This was a very negative influence on the revolutionary movement in many countries.

The third point is a very totalitarian demand for power and control by the party. In the end this boiled down to the dominance of the politbureau or even one person. The fourth point is about the annihilation of democracy rather than its development. Rosa Luxembourg wrote a great deal about this problem in her work on the Russian Revolution. Finally, Stalinism is about a terrorist regime. There is a lack of justice and a legal system with all forms of suppression.

These are general structures of Stalinism. One should understand that the majority of revolutionary movements at that time accepted Stalinism as the correct way of moving forward, as what is revolutionary. The parties deformed themselves under this influence and in this respect there are also socio-psychological effects on the acting persons. At least my generation inherited this; we grew up in structures which accepted Stalinism.

So, a rupture with Stalinism is not just about a break with structures but is also

profoundly about a change in mind and personality and so on. However, the break with Stalinism has its own history in the twentieth century. The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) inaugurated the first debate on this phenomenon of Stalinism. But this was quite a superficial discussion primarily about the personality cult. This debate could not be deeper because the protagonists were closely linked with the old structures. After Krushchev's fall from power debates around this problem almost came to an end. Those who tried to discuss the problem of Stalinism were regarded as dissidents within the movement. With *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* this discussion came to the fore again.

Now to come to the German Democratic Republic (GDR), one must say the German communists at this time were especially children of Stalinism. This has something to do with the specific role of German communists in the movement. The German party was for a long time, after the Russian party, the biggest communist party in the world. This was a party that had quite a solid theoretical foundation. Most of the cadres of the German Communist Party (CPG) were exiles in the Soviet Union, and very many of them were killed there. From 1933 to 1945, more of the leadership and leading comrades of the CPG were murdered in the Soviet Union than in Nazi Germany. Those leading comrades who survived and returned to Germany with the Red army had to more or less accommodate themselves to Soviet positions. They were partially involved in crimes of Stalinism too, in a very specific manner. I have to describe this a little bit more.

They were convinced that there was only one way to victory and this was through supporting the Stalinised Soviet Union. On the other hand, they understood that it was impossible to implement the Soviet system without any changes in Germany. That is to say, in the GDR a power structure was implemented which had in it important elements of Stalinism, but there was also an attempt to find space for maneuver. In quite a different manner this can also be said of the Italian communists or French communists. Stalinism was not only of one kind; there were many variations.

I will say a few short words on the problem of why the German communists were involved in a specific manner in Stalinism. In the 1980s in West Germany when we started to more openly debate the problems of Stalinism there was always one argument: that the hands of the German communists were free of blood, were not blood-stained. This is both true and not true. Within the German

Communist Party among those people who were exiled in Moscow, there were always demands to exclude somebody from the party. Although the leadership of the German Communist Party in Moscow did not draw up any list of people to be killed in camps and so on, they excluded people. The people who were excluded from the party were then victims of state repression in the Soviet Union. Some of the leading comrades signed such lists of people to be excluded from the party. They certainly felt that if they did not sign they would be next to be included on such lists. This was a very tragic problem, with German communists caught between Stalin and Hitler.

This is a very rough description. One should do this in more detail. There is also an important literature which you can look at.

The PDS is a socialist party. How would you characterize its ideological foundations?

This is a very complicated question. I am convinced that there will still be quite sharp debates on this question. It boils down to the question of whether or not a party such as the PDS really needs an ideological foundation; already we have debates on this question. Maybe I should first say something about the facts.

After 1989 we had to find a new foundation for socialist thinking. Many people turned away from socialism in general as a result of the demise of socialism in Eastern Europe and the overall crisis of the international left wing movement. It was necessary to first define what should be thrown away. We had to throw away the dogmatic ideas of Marxism-Leninism, the theory of democratic centralism, the idea of a monolithic party and the idea that the transition to a socialist revolution would unfold according to fixed and scientifically recognisable laws. To confront these issues was very important because without this it would have been impossible to go over to a new form of socialist thinking. The PDS drew the conclusions that we were no longer a party founded on a definite world outlook.

We are a political party, which has its traditional roots. In the beginning we were a little helpless when it came to describing this situation. The classical foundation was always about referring to Marx, Engels and Lenin. The German parties added Liebknecht and Luxemburg. The PDS added Kautsky, Bernstein and other thinkers. But everybody who is dealing a little bit with theory knows that Bernstein and Luxemburg are big controversies, big contradictions.

The problem today is whether the PDS can find a way back to a foundation for its policy in terms of a certain world outlook. That will answer the question as to whether the party in the future will have more in common than just day-to-day politics. For me the decisive thing is not to name this or that thinker, but to describe more precisely the fundamental ideas on which the party is founding itself. But this will be a very important question of the future because if you take day-to-day politics your answers can differ very widely. If there is no common foundation in ideas the party can very quickly drift apart. The vision of socialism, which will stay with the PDS, can become very abstract, very far away - like a confession.

To put it very sharply it is my personal idea and perhaps I do not represent a majority view. I think in 1989-90 it was very necessary to throw away the adherence to an ideology and to renovate the party. But now we have reached a point where it is necessary to go back to some definite ideological foundation for the party. I see it in a very broad manner as reclaiming the spiritual heritage of Marxism. But this will be a debate in the party. I think that other parties in Western Europe have the same problem.

The rupture of Marxism-Leninism at the end of the 1980s, happened because of the dogmatic ways in which members of the party understood ideology. I think that people of the GDR who grew up with socialism did not know much about Marxism. They knew the slogans, but not the real content. A second strategic problem which will also be very much debated in the party is: what is the true role of a revolutionary party, if you understand yourself as a revolutionary party, if the revolution is not on the agenda now? This is a difficult question. You can preserve revolution for yourself as a belief but this does not tell you anything about what you should do in practice. I am deeply convinced that the practical task of a political party, of a revolutionary party today, is to generate in society such massive contradictions that the conceptions of other political parties cannot be realised purely but only in reference to your ideas. You can influence a society in a more social, just and solidaristic direction. Maybe one cannot achieve more than that in the foreseeable future.

What is the strategic approach of the PDS to socialism? Secondly, how does the PDS understand the role of parliament? Lastly what is the role of popular social movements?

The first question on socialism means that we need a conception of a society that

has a different economic foundation where not only private capital, in the form of the big corporations dominates, but where you have different, diverse economic forms of property. That should be a mix of private property, of co-operative property, state property, municipal property and many forms of how you control the disposal of this property. Maybe not even the property itself is the decisive thing, but rather the disposal of it, how it is used. This disposal must be democratically controlled, it must be in line with the political aim, the political objective.

This is a big difference from neo-liberalism, which starts from the view that the market regulates all these processes. Socialism should be a conception of a society where more and more non-state and civil society organisations take over the tasks of the state. Many forms of democracy should be developed. A society, which organises international exchange in a new manner; and builds on the opportunities of globalization. A society which develops a new relationship between the sexes, a new relationship to nature. These are all elements which describe socialist politics in the future.

What role should parliament play in PDS politics? I must confess until now I don't know a better form of how social contradictions could be solved in a democratic manner. That's why I give parliaments a big significance, not only because I am now a member of parliament. What we need is a renaissance of parliamentary politics because what we have is more lobbyist than parliamentary. Parliaments must be the place where different social conceptions are debated, where the relationship of forces is very important, and is reflected in laws. If you concentrate all these processes in one category the results should be some sort of social treaty not in the form of a written document.

One of the big thinkers of modern socialism in Germany once described the constitution as a sort of truce. It reflects the relationship of forces of different social groups in a concrete moment. Parliaments must be added up or must be filled up with many forms of involvement of the population in the democratic process. But again some principles should not be the subject of people's vote or referenda. For instance, basic human rights should not be subject to the whims of any political conjuncture. On the question of government this is also a problem of present politics for all left wing parties. I think that socialist and communists should have the courage to go into government if the relationship of forces allows this. But they should also be ready to go out of government if necessary.

This is easier said than done. We should have a position regarding centre-left governments, which now exist in Europe. It's a very difficult problem for us as many divisions in the left wing parties of Europe come out of this problem. One should always understand in parliament and in government that you can only push through things to the extent that there already exists a sort of consensus or wish for reforms in the population. You can't implement more than the population agrees to. It was Gramsci who wrote a lot on this problem. Before you can implement serious change in politics there should be a serious change in the consciousness of people, their ideas, their culture, and their way of living. Social movements quite heavily influence the consciousness of people so we think that without those social movements there will be no change of politics in this country. In Germany we do not have any significant social movements and you can't invent them.

Previously we saw a contradiction between parliament and democracy. Traditionally the communists did not hold parliament in high esteem. Today we see that socialism can't be realised in the way we thought before, that is by one single revolution. We see the development of the control mechanisms of a civil society, including the parliament, as much more important than before. This is a theoretical background. The revolution will take other forms than we thought before and it will have other substance, other contents, and even other aims.

How is this strategic perspective advanced and expressed programmatically?

It is only expressed in a rudimentary way. Our existing party programme was worked out in 1991-92; it was very much influenced by the experience of the catastrophic failure of real socialism. Our thinking also came from East European Marxism and there was no organic link with Western Marxism. We are just starting programmatic discussion where all these problems must be discussed more deeply. Certainly our programme, like all our ideas and thinking, is certainly Euro-centric. We don't have a global view on the world, not in the practical policy and not in the programme. There are formulations and there are writings on this, but we have not really internalised it. When there is a party congress then we have foreign comrades, who are greeted with big applause and there is no problem. That's not what I'm speaking about. I'm speaking about the problem that we have in terms of viewing the world in its wholeness, in its unity and that the view of the old Europe is only the view of one part of the world. This will be a difficult problem in the future.

How would you define the process of the unification of Germany? What kind of advances can you identify and what have been some of the problems?

I must honestly confess that I did not wish for or did not want this kind of unification of Germany. I grew up with two German states; for me this was quite a normal situation. I think hardly anybody from my generation seriously thought that Germany would be a united state again.

This process was a very complicated one. If you take the problem formally, the question formally, a lot has been achieved. However, what has emerged is the imposition of one system and state on to another. Maybe there would have been another way if the relationship of forces had been different (e.g. when the progressive elements of the two German states would have been merged into a new unity). I will take the human rights problem as an example. The West always underlined very strongly the importance of individual human rights. Looking at it today I think they are important, you can describe them as freedom rights. But the East always underlined collective human rights, which you can describe as equality rights. The difference in these values is still very visible in the two parts of Germany. People from the former East Germany continue to underline much more these rights of equality. And, on the other hand, people from the former West Germany still underline these liberty rights, the freedom rights. It would have been very good if the two sorts of rights would have been incorporated into the new Germany. But in reality many of these equality rights have been annihilated. This is one element of this unification.

The second element is that many of the governing forces did not understand that the culture of life in the two parts of Germany was very different. A long time will be needed to adapt these two cultures of life to one another. I am not proposing that the people of the West should become the same as the people in the East; that is impossible. But I do not want, on the other hand, the Easterners to become Westerners. I had the idea of a society where you have unity and diversity, a conscious acceptance of these differences. This is very important for the culture of a society. Otherwise you get a society of victors, who feel themselves better and stronger, and of losers who feel themselves very suppressed, subdued.

The third element of unification I criticise very much and that is Germany's unification should have been much more closely linked with the overall European unification process. It will be a very interesting question to see

whether many of these very sharp problems in Germany can be solved in the framework of European unification. Similarly can Kosovo and the Balkans be solved in the context of the unification process. I think it would be much easier to solve these problems in an overall unification process of Europe, where you have a real equalisation of the economic situation in many parts of Europe, where the different ethnic groups do not play such an important role, where the borders are much more open. These questions have not been sufficiently solved and were not even worked upon during Germany's unification. But maybe we ourselves did not see these problems as important enough at that time too.

Many socialist intellectuals in Western Europe subscribe to a view that Western Europe has reached a stage in its development that is sometimes referred to as post industrial. Socially the working class, in this view, has shrunk and politically it is irrelevant. What is your view on the state of the working class in Germany?

I think there is also a big debate within the PDS on whether class questions still have meaning today. And if yes, then what significance do they have? To discuss this question seriously I would begin by identifying my problems with classical Marxist class analysis. I think one of the mistakes of the past was that one took the objective situation of a class and drew conclusions on its subjective desires and aspirations. However, people located in one class can have quite different and even competing interests, wishes and desires. That is to say, from a class analysis you cannot directly draw conclusions on the objective interests of classes. There is a difference between the two. More specifically, if you look at the middle classes income levels vary and this creates different degrees of dependence on salaries. Some are achieving economic independence such that salaried employment becomes less important. This part of society is growing and will play a much bigger role in the future.

Moreover with class analysis, one should move away from the view that the core of the working class is the industrial working class. There is a shift away from this working class of industry into services, administration and so on. One has to understand this transition and develop particular categories. The second example, which is significant for economic politics, has to do with capital and pension funds. They play an important role in all the worldwide speculation of capital because, like a machine, they draw into themselves all the small capitals of the world and throw them into this big speculation process. These funds are quite important for formulating concrete economic politics. You could say there

is a new type of producer and a new type of proprietor emerging. Marxists should analyse this thoroughly today and develop their strategies from this.

This is a very complicated problem, but this is one of the basic problems we must understand. We still have in our minds the picture of this old producer, the industrial worker, who certainly still exists and will continue to exist for a long time. The old type of proprietor, the private capitalist, will also continue to exist for a long time, but the two are no longer the decisive forms of relations of production.

We really need Marxist economists and they are quite rare. I do not understand enough about the theory of economics, but this problem occupies me all the time and it is a global problem. These proprietors and these producers are not acting only in a national framework but in a global framework. This certainly has something to do with the modern possibilities of information and communication technology. Previously, when you wanted to speculate on the Japanese stock exchange from Germany, you needed half an hour because the telephone connection was quite slow. The capital trade was always quite slow, but today with computers it takes just seconds. This means there are quite different possibilities of exchange of capitals around the world.

Can you give us some empirical insight on the state of the working class in Germany (e.g. are unions are in decline)?

Today in Germany, I think, the working class no longer has an understanding of itself as a class per se, that is as a class for itself. Marx always distinguished between the class as such and the class for itself. The class as such certainly exists today. But only when the working class constitutes itself as a class for itself does it become a political factor. This political factor as a subject certainly continues to exist in the form of trade unions, for instance. But the trade unions are also in deep crisis today because the new modern forms of production and exchange are challenging them.

Currently trade unions are undergoing a big concentration process. I assume that at the end of this process, which will likely last about ten years, we will have about four or five very large trade unions with millions of members in Germany. They will cover all the key spheres of production: the sphere of metal works, the service industry, the state administration, the whole construction industry, ecology and probably mining and energy, which has less and less significance in

Germany. There is really a new trade union movement emerging. The trade unions are still and will continue to be a very important factor in social struggles and social movements.

One problem that trade unions and the PDS (or any other political party) has not solved is the question of how to include and incorporate the unemployed into these movements. A majority of unemployed people currently have no social representation in Germany. Also we have to expect that many people will be forced to have two or three jobs or formally will not have a proprietor employing them. This means formally they will be independent. The problem, then, is who will represent these people and their interests? Who will organise them together as a political force?

Neo-liberalism has emphasised a limited role for the state in the economy. What has been the experience of neo-liberalism in Germany and what implications has this had for the welfare state? What are the thoughts of the PDS with regard to challenges facing the welfare state?

Neo-liberalism has become the dominant system all over Europe, that is, in all the big European countries. But there have always been differences between, let us say, Germany and England, even when both countries are governed by conservatives. The specific form of British neo-liberalism tried to annihilate all forms of social solutions for people, whereas the Christian Democrats in Germany tried to realise neo-liberalism in the political field while still preserving some social network. It is a specific German policy to include and incorporate trade unions in the whole process, and this has been realised even during conservative governments. They always understood the trade unions as a regulating factor which should not be destroyed, but rather should be incorporated and used. But the basic aim to keep politics out of the economy is certainly the same in all countries.

Certainly in this policy many elements of the welfare state have been attacked and partially destroyed, but at the same time definite principles of the welfare state have been preserved. For instance, the level of social insurance has been cut back, but the principle of social insurance for everyone has not been destroyed. Even conservatives will not completely abandon the system in which some degree of insurance against maladies or protection in old age exists. The big struggle is about the money, about the level of insurance, but not the principle as such. In this sense the German bourgeoisie was quite farsighted in

comparison with other countries. But on the other hand, I also think neo-liberalism is approaching its own limits. Political expression of this tendency is the fact that in many countries the conservatives have been voted out of office and replaced by social democrats and other forces. I also think that there will be a worldwide tendency for more regulation of these global economic processes rather than an increase in the deregulation of these processes. Capital cannot survive in the long run with this absolutely free stream of currency speculations, for instance.

I think that in the next 10 to 20 years a new type of capital will emerge, where there will be further expressions of social security and a social levelling of finance capital.

What is the view and the approach of the PDS to regional economic integration?

In my view, many of the things we want to achieve and the many ways in which we want to shape society could be more easily implemented in a European framework rather than a national framework. That is why I would like to see the left stimulate the question of European unity in a broader perspective. Today perhaps it is unrealistic, but in the broader perspective I am speaking about, I would support a European Federal State, a European constitution, and a European citizenship (i.e. all Europeans would at least have two citizenships, a European one and their national one). I know, for instance, that the French comrades see this totally differently and the Swedish comrades, for example, do not want to join the European Union at all. All of them have good arguments for their views, but I think the perspective of the left is a united Europe and a European Federation. I am quite deeply convinced of this.

As far as the leftwing parties are concerned European integration means we should begin to lay the foundation for a united leftwing European Party a party in which you have communists, socialists, other leftwing forces. There would first need to be quite a formal structure maybe; there are some tendencies within the European parliament and its legislation that force us to do so, that is to create something formally. Of course you cannot only have a formal structure. You must also develop common ideas, but such a process is incredibly difficult to achieve. But I think this is a perspective of the European left.

Does the PDS have an approach to the unity of the left beyond Europe?

In Europe we have implemented a sort of cooperation of leftwing forces. The problem we have is that the East European left is very weakly represented in this co-operation; it is more a West European left that is cooperating. I am very glad that, for instance, in Latin America the Sao Paulo Forum exists, where the whole left in all its diversity is coming together, debating, discussing problems and working together.

Unfortunately I know very little about the left in Asia and what forms of cooperation exist there. I am also equally ignorant about the left in Africa. We have initiated a very interesting process between the Sao Paulo Forum and the European left where there will be an official meeting of the two forces. We have been working for two years on this project. The aim is to establish a real political link and some elements of political co-operation between these two forces.

In the *Communist Manifesto* it states that the proletariat of all countries must unite. We were born as an international movement, but then became effectively many, many national movements. We have to find new ways to re-engage the international arena. But you must think in terms of long time periods to realise this goal. On the other hand, you cannot return to the world congresses of communist parties which existed in the 1960s. We must find new forms of worldwide exchanges between socialist and communist parties; a common theoretical debate is absolutely necessary. There will not be a new world centre for the leftwing movement, but such foreign connections like the one between the Sao Paulo forum and the new European left are necessary and will develop. At least it is my hope that things go in this direction.

What in your opinion are the challenges and prospects for socialism in the 21st century?

I can express it by the word 'globalisation'. We are now entering a situation which Marx and Engels tried to describe in the *Communist Manifesto*. Moreover, Gorbachev said something important: 'those who come too late will be punished by life, by practice; but you can also come too early'. Only now we have a situation described by Marx and Engels of capitalism as a worldwide phenomenon, with all the laws and regulations working worldwide.

Until now the left has only discussed globalisation as a danger involving uncontrolled streams of capitalism, loss of democratic influence over this development, etc. I think we should also understand globalisation as an

opportunity. Maybe through such a process of global exchange we would have the chance to find new understandings about: how a future society could be structured, how it should develop, how a new world economy could be constructed, how human rights could be implemented worldwide, or how foreign policy could be on a solid legal and worldwide basis. International organisations could play a bigger role in this process. For instance, we should defend the United Nations against its liquidation. This is one of the big issues for the left in this new millennium.

In Europe, thoughtful leftwing theoreticians and thinkers call the 20th century the cursed century. I think the 20th century has taken a high toll on humanity all over the world. I think one of the tolls is an experience of a socialism which did not succeed. This is a very painful and deep experience in which many human destinies were involved. But I think this experience was necessary. The price was high, and now we should do everything to ensure that it was not in vain.

Brecht You Are Free !

Dear Brecht

The African eye
is a witness.

Restless revolutionary
ancestor.

Stalinism trapped you.

Our generation
sets you free.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Bernard Voisseur

Leader in the French Communist Party

What have been the influences on your life which informed your commitment and involvement in the French communist party?

There are no communists in my family; it was a rural family influenced by the church. At that time, nothing could influence me and the family to become communists. My studies in Paris coincided with the war in Algeria. My political orientation tended increasingly to the left and I became a member of the communist student's organisation mostly as a form of provocation against my family. While studying philosophy I discovered Marx and was a student of Althusser.

What convinced me to join the Communist Party was a watershed experience I had while I was a young teacher. At the end of the second quarter of the school year a teachers' council was appointed to determine the future of some of the pupils: would they have to repeat the year or would they be promoted to a higher class? In cases where the pupil had excelled academically or had fared very poorly the decision was simple. The problem arose with the majority of pupils who fell in between these two extremes. I remember the case of a young boy where 50% of the teachers agreed that he should be promoted to the higher class and the other 50% disagreed. After much discussion there was still no consensus of opinion. Finally a woman teacher insisted that a decision be made and asked the school secretary about the professions of the boy's parents. The secretary confirmed that both parents were workers. So the leader of the group said that if they were both workers, the boy obviously had no future and should therefore repeat the year. I was very upset by this. So I fought and succeeded in ensuring the boy was promoted to the higher class. That same evening I joined the Communist Party. It was neither the political actualities nor the policy of the Communist Party that influenced my decision; rather it was my discovery of how French society functioned and my realisation that only the Communist Party could intervene in such a question.

What does it mean to be a communist today?

I think that it couldn't mean the same thing today as it meant yesterday. The word

'communist' originated in France and was used here for the first time in the 18th century in a political context. It was during the French Revolution. You know the German writer, Heinrich Heine, who lived in Paris for the greater part of his life. In 1841 he proposed the most interesting things around communism. In short, there were communists long before the Russian Revolution and long before the birth of the French Communist Party.

What does it mean to be a communist today? It means to place oneself within this tradition and to integrate. This is the first motivation. The second one is to study what happened in the USSR, to study it and know it, because it didn't work. So we have to understand how the great hope of the Russian Revolution could change into a nightmare, to learn all the lessons and to understand how this could happen. Thirdly, it is necessary to define communism in a new manner. It is necessary to see what changed in the society and to relate this to a changed definition of communism. This means communism must contribute to change in our society but in its present context. In other words, to change society with the purpose that it should become a society that no longer conforms to the capitalist logic.

France has a rich and intellectual Marxist culture. Can you tell us about this and how the French Communist Party has related to this?

Karl Marx always had little confidence in the dialectical spirit of the French and theoretical capacity of its leaders. When *Das Kapital* was first translated into French it was by a French worker. Many years later the French Communist Party was founded in 1920. The party was what we call in French 'only for workers' without taking into account the other classes. It gave priority in everything to workers. For example, if, in a particular meeting with several people, two of them were workers and the others were engineers, teachers or writers, it was preferred that the workers would lead. Only the workers were accepted as leaders.

During the first years of the party's existence after 1920 the Marxist tradition in France was built mainly outside of the party because inside the party there were all these workers - leaders who were not intellectuals. Later the party made it possible for the intellectuals to meet the party. Today we don't think that we are the only owners of Marxism as we believed previously.

Since the late 60s and early 70s the French Communist Party has been known as a Euro Communist Party. What was Euro communism, its experience and will you still characterise the French Communist Party as Euro communist?

During the 70s it is true that this expression was used to designate a communism that would be different from that of the Soviet experience. This word appeared during a meeting of Italian, French and Spanish communists and it means that we can conceive communism only within a context of liberty and democracy as opposed to the Soviet definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This word has disappeared and today its definition would be too narrow because Euro communism means pertaining to Europe.

In a book written by Goran Therborn he argues that societies in Europe have lots of public control. There are many nationalised industries as well as pension funds. If you look at the pension funds, most of the wealth in European societies and even in America is social wealth; it's a collective wealth. Therefore he argues that these societies are characterised by all the criteria that Marx proposed and therefore the challenge in Europe is to democratise the public control of the economy. What is the view of the French Communist Party on the imperative of democratizing public control?

It is true that in France capitalism is not a pure capitalism because of all the struggles of the people, the working class, who succeeded in many social conquests. In France there are very large public services and also nationalised enterprises. There is a social model in France - social security for illness, accidents and pensions for the elderly. Schooling is an obligation and is free. It's true that the struggle of the people imposed these limits against capitalist power. One of the challenges today is to defend these social gains or conquests. If these are destroyed you have an ultra-capitalism. Our objective is to develop further these social conquests.

With both the experience of Euro communism and the collapse of Eastern Europe, do you think Marxism is still a very important force in the French Communist Party and wider society?

I don't like the word Marxism because of the suffix 'ism'. Whenever you say 'ism' there is the risk of a systemisation of dogma. If you mean by Marxism what the Soviets called Marxism or Leninism, it has no value today. On the other hand, the thoughts of Marx are very important. He provides instruments for thinking,

concepts, tools which may be used today. Marx also enables us to think with other thinkers who are able to provide interesting ideas for the transformation of society. The problem is to change the society, and anything which helps us to know the society can help us to change it.

What has been the impact of neo-liberalism in France?

It is very strong. For the past 20 years these ideas have been internalised. This relates to globalization which is another name for capitalism and another way of imposing the domination of finance. What is going on is a European construction. We don't go against it because it is European but because it is neo-liberal and because of the explosion of unemployment. Officially there are 3 million unemployed people in France but really there are many more because many are unknown and also because for some work is precarious. For example, there are people who work for a month or so and then they don't work for a while and then they may find employment for another month. They work without any social guarantees, health benefits and even the wages of most of these young workers is very low. This is a regression in France. Fifteen years ago everyone conceded that unemployment was exceptional and that society should guarantee a job for everybody. Now it is official; it is said that it is normal and that there should be unemployment in society according to neo-liberalism. We consider this to be a regression. It's a modernity and a form of inhumanity and what we want is modernity and humanity.

Do you think that European integration will open the way for left advance in Europe and beyond?

We are for a Europe that will allow us to develop a European civilisation but not just for Europeans. For example, in France, there is a minimum wage and you cannot earn less than this. In Europe there are other countries where this doesn't exist. A worker can work at any price or else the minimum wage is lower than in France. We would want this minimum wage to be the same in all the European countries and that it should be as high as possible. To us that is positive.

We say that the situation should be harmonised but capital wants the contrary. They want to use the example of lower wages in some countries and use this to lower the minimum wages in all countries and under all social conditions. In Portugal the minimum wage is much lower than in France. The attitude of big enterprise is that if French workers refuse to accept the same low wages as the

Portuguese workers, then the work will be given to Portuguese workers and the French will be unemployed. It's a struggle between two conceptions of Europe and the positive thing is that new strikes and new struggles are appearing, with the workers of several countries in Europe often striking together.

The ideas of communism, socialism and democracy were born in Europe. Europe should therefore promote to other countries the language of democracy and co-operation and not the hegemonic power of the United States, of the dollar and of finance.

Since the restructuring of capitalism in the 1970s, there has been an increased intensity of financial flows as well as an increase in the emergence of transnational and multinational companies. Some have argued that capitalism has further polarised, has further increased inequalities between countries and this has deepened the crisis since the 1970s. What is the view of the PCF?

I read a United Nations report which stated that the 358 wealthiest people in the world have a fortune that is equal to the value of income of two billion six hundred million people or almost 50% of mankind. Today some people are richer than whole states; yes, many inequalities are created from neo-liberalism. Today the rich tend to invest much more in the stock exchange without creating any jobs or products. We are against this, we think it is a very bad thing, so we have to act against the inequalities between the countries, between the people and also against the inequalities inside each country. What we consider necessary is to take action against finance and speculation. For example, we believe there should be a tax on mobile capital flows. We have many proposals.

The French communist party has had a rich experience with government at municipal, provincial and national level. What lessons can be learned from this?

The simple lesson is not to have power vested solely in the state. There must also be citizen intervention. Without space for citizen's action powerful social forces can capture the state and win.

In the post- Soviet era as well as in the current context of France, what is the strategy and programmatic approach of the PCF for building of socialism?

We are acting for the communist transformation of society. We reject a stageist

approach to socialism: first stage capitalism, then second stage socialism and then finally communism. France is a developed country and we want to overcome capitalism with a communist perspective. We believe labour can be transformed in this society from being a commodity for capitalists to something more. In this regard the workers themselves and not some powerful bureaucracy has to decide how this happens.

Alongside our party, the communist party, France also has a socialist party. But the socialist party doesn't struggle for socialism anymore. It fights even more for a civilized capitalism. In our discussions with them they believe we are inside capitalism and the only thing we can do is to manage and balance capitalism. We always refer to a society which will come after capitalism and this is a big difference we have with the socialist party. We have engaged French society on these differences in the hope that in our discussions the ideas of social transformation will be stronger than the ideas of social management.

What are the challenges and prospects for socialism in the 21st Century?

We want to change and transform society, but we don't want a state like the Soviet Union. We don't want to reach that stage. We are no longer in favour of a transition from capitalism to socialism. While it is true that this transformation could take a long time, we think that we should proceed immediately towards a transformation into communism.

The Ghost of Stalin

Jaded political mind
constantly roaming the
cemetery of political thought
reincarnating belief
justifying human tragedy
feeding the political opportunist
destined for the sewer
of history.



CHAPTER TWELVE

Hilary Wainwright

Editor of Red Pepper Magazine

What influences and experiences informed your commitment to socialism?

I suppose I came from a very political family. My father was a liberal Member of Parliament and he and my mother had a very sharp sense of social injustice. Hence, in my family, while we were middle class and quite well off, we were constantly made quite aware of the sort of inequalities around us. We did not lead a middle-class life typical in the West in which everybody is very cosseted and isolated from the rest of society. We were not isolated from the rest of society. I was always politically active and was always very rebellious, both against my parents and my teachers. So I was always a bit of a rebel anyway. When it came to thinking about society as a whole as distinct from simply interpersonal forms of authority or any authority over me as a person, I suppose I found liberalism inadequate in dealing with the inequalities that I had been brought up to oppose. On the other hand, socialism in Britain was represented by the Labour Party, which seemed to be very conservative and did not seem to offer a way out of the contradictions of liberalism. Moreover, socialism was represented by a rather sectarian and impotent sort of combination: Trotskyism and a rather impotent Communist Party.

So initially, in the mid 1960s, when I really became a socialist or really became aware of this incompleteness of liberalism, there was nowhere to go. Then there was a radicalisation, which occurred among the young liberals who got very involved in fighting apartheid and who became sort of anarcho-syndicalists. We all wore little badges saying that we want a revolution. In that way I was introduced to syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism, and a notion of socialism from below which rested on working-class power. But even then the notion of the working class was rather abstract. I then got involved in student politics, but knew that student politics on its own was not enough. Then May 1968 happened and one hoped that the students would light the spark amongst the workers. I remember going to leaflet the workers outside and inside the factories early in the morning. That in itself was a radicalising experience because you experienced the contrast between yourself as a student being able to go back to bed or have a nice breakfast while all these workers to whom we were distributing leaflets faced a day of work on the assembly line. To look towards the workplace

as a place of alienation and potential resistance was an emotionally radicalising experience.

I then wondered about the Labour Party and whether it could be changed. I did my thesis on the Labour left at its height at the end of the 1950s. I came to the conclusion that the Labour Party could not be changed and that there were structural reasons why it could not be changed. I then looked to other kinds of organisations that linked the working class with socialist politics. For a period I joined the 4th International. I admired its internationalism, its critique of the Soviet Union, and its belief in self-activity and the popular power of the working class. It was not a sectarian kind of Trotskyism. That was the beginning of my political education and radicalisation. So it is a mixture of contradictions of liberalism, the experiences of inequality, and then the sense that radical change was possible, which was opened up by 1968 and the movements across the world at that time.

Currently, you are the editor of a socialist magazine - Red Pepper. What has been its role and influence in British society?

I think in understanding the importance of any leftist initiative in British society one has to start by recognizing that we have an electoral system that gives the Labour Party - a single party - a monopoly over working-class and leftist political representation (except until now with changes in Scotland and Wales and maybe elsewhere). But we need to start from the fact that there has been one political party in which the left has been very subordinate and yet there have been 20 to 30 years of radicalisation since 1968, which has really had no voice. And in the absence of a party, I suppose a magazine is one contribution towards preparing the way for some kind of party or at least consolidating some of the political conditions for a challenge to Labour (or to new Labour) and to the leadership of the party.

A magazine enables, I suppose, some programmatic ideas to develop, to be debated, and for some kind of constituency to form or gain cohesion. It also enables experiences to be shared and reflected on. *Red Pepper* does not have the resources to do this adequately, but it makes a contribution. It seems like one of the best ways a politically committed group of intellectuals and activists can contribute to developing cohesion among a New Left and it also enables that left to communicate to the rest of society. So *Red Pepper* has had an impact on public debate; it gives a voice to the radical left, a voice that cannot just be dismissed as

old fashioned because we are patently not old fashioned. We may be too leftist for New Labour, but that is not the same as being 'old'. 'Old' is just a kind of meaningless phrase.

What was Thatcherism and what was its impact on British society and particularly the working class?

I suppose Thatcherism was really the ideological-political expression of Capital's imperative to defeat the growing strength of labour in the 1960s and 1970s. The labour movement was gaining in industrial strength and then, increasingly in the 1970s, political strength. In fact, the labour leadership did a certain amount to contain the strength or impact of the radical working class that emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s. But it needed the sort of evangelical right-wing confidence of Thatcher to begin to reverse and destroy the sources of strength that the labour movement and the left had built up in the 1960s and 1970s. Thatcherism virtually destroyed all the forces of collective strength in British society. It massively weakened the trade union movement, local government and most parts of the public sector. In doing so, it weakened the working class's ability to defend itself through trade unionism. It massively weakened the trade unions. The economically active part of the population went from 50% to something like 30%. This is not to suggest that the trade unions do not have any strength or have been completely destroyed.

Thatcherism also made survival much more difficult, destroying, in the process, the space people had to do things beyond earning their daily bread. With the health and transport services increasingly run down, survival just the day-to-day problems of life - became much more burdensome. Universities became much more competitive and it became much more difficult to be a public intellectual. So, it was not just the working class that was hit, but also the *intelligentsia*. The media has been affected by Thatcherism in the sense that the performance of the stock market and profit have had an overwhelming influence on the way newspapers are run. So much less space is devoted to serious public-service broadcastings and public-service reporting. So, unleashing the market has led to a situation where society has become more and more fragmented and atomised and, ultimately, dominated by the markets. This has displaced a kind of public culture, really, and the kind of spaces civil society needs in order to remain democratic and lively.

Do you think that the left in Britain contributed to the emergence of Thatcherism?

In some ways I think it was less the left and more the traditional right and centre of the labour movement that contributed to this. The radical left, the New Left, the left that the Greater London Council and Ken Livingston represented, was a direct competitor to Thatcherism. You can say that Thatcherism had a political appeal way beyond the interests it represented. I am treating it as representing the interests of big capital. With the emphasis on deregulation and privatisation, the economic beneficiaries were basically global mobile capital, but obviously Thatcherism had an appeal way beyond that very small group of elite people. Her appeal was obviously to build on the failures of the social democratic state, in its welfare provision, in its running of industry, and its running of local government.

Now the New Left, as it were - Tony Ben or Ken Livingston or the women's movement had in their different ways begun a critique of the old settlement, if you like, the old order. They began a critique of old-style nationalisation, a critique of the welfare state with an emphasis on democratisation as an alternative to privatisation or marketisation. By defeating all this, by rubbing out and marginalising the New Left (the creative, democratic left), the labour leadership, whether it was Wilson, Callaghan or Kinnock or Tony Blair (though in a way Tony Blair was after the defeat of the New Left), prepared the way for Thatcherism. One can ask why Thatcherism has been so successful in Britain. One reason why neo-liberalism has been so particularly virulent and powerful here is partly because the radical left was never able to have a public voice, besides the Greater London Council. Whereas in France, Italy, Germany, Sweden and Denmark the radical left, although it's not very coherent, did provide an alternative to social democracy, a leftist alternative. Here no leftist alternative was provided and hence many more people here than on the continent were drawn to the radical right.

Can you give us some insight into the historical experience of the Labour Party as well as its political dilemmas during the 20th century?

The key thing about the Labour Party has been that it was formed as a political representative of labour organised in the form of trade unions. So, from the start it has seen itself, in a certain sense, as a voice of labour within the existing system. That has always curtailed its radicalism and it has always had a

conservatism at its core. Yet any socialist who is serious about the project of socialist transformation, would inevitably want to be part of the party (that is, the party of the labour movement or party of the working class).

In this sense, the left is trapped. The left's route to the working class seemed to be only through the Labour Party, partially because there is no other chance, in terms of the electoral system, of any alternative. Also, because the unions were actually part of the Labour Party, this made it very difficult to see any alternative except to be part of the Labour Party. Yet the Labour Party was inherently conservative, as are trade unions. These institutions bargain with the system. The Labour Party is politically bargaining with the system. And so the Labour Party has always been conservative even in its attitudes towards reforming the state in a democratic way. It has always deferred to the monarchy, to the House of Lords, and it is only recently that the House of Lords has been seriously challenged.

That is the sort of underlying problem. There has always been this contradiction between the radicalism of the political activists who join the Labour Party as individuals from an idealistic socialist perspective, on the one hand, and the cautious moderation and bargaining perspective of the trade unions on the other. There have been moments when the two have come together, when the trade union movement has been dramatically radicalised, like during a general strike or during the Bennite period during the 1970s, and at these moments it looked like the left could win. In a way that has been an illusion and in the end the unions have ended up taking the moderate positions and supporting a moderate leadership.

The Labour Party has been at its best when it has simply been achieving trade union assistance within the system, like between 1945 and 1950. Capitalism was relatively weak and therefore a party based on the unions could really encroach significantly on capital's prerogatives. It has always been subject, in a way, to capitalism's bottom line.

In your characterisation of the Labour Party it has never really been a socialist party other than just the political expression of negotiating the interest of the working class within the system of society.

Yes, it has been constitutional about public ownership. I think it was always a fudge. It was never really committed to eliminating capitalist economics.

What is Blair's strategy, sometimes commonly referred to as the 'Third Way'?

I think Blair is really about ameliorated capitalism. I think he wants to tame a section of the ruling class, the capitalist class, to be a little more socially responsible. I think his key idea, in terms of mechanism and agency, is really a partnership between government and capital. He is appealing to those sections of capital that fear social unrest if neo-liberalism goes too far. It is about putting a social reign on neo-liberalism, pulling it back. It is avoiding the extremes of a completely deregulated market without going far in the direction of a socialised economy. It is not even social democracy, really. It is not prepared to interfere with profit generation. Within the basic objective of a profit-run economy, its concern is to achieve more social justice than the completely unregulated market would. It is just trying to leave more crumbs under the table.

Could it not be argued that this Third Way strategy is a shift to the right, in the sense that it is largely an attempt to win over the vote of the middle classes? Put differently, because the working class in all of Europe has declined over the past 20 to 30 years, on its own it cannot secure an electoral victory for the Labour Party, and hence there is a courting of middle-class forces. Is there a structural logic to Blairism?

I think there is a superficial structural logic in that the traditional working classes have declined in spheres like ship building and heavy engineering. But to me, the working class as a whole, in terms of the strict definition of people who sell their labour power, has not declined. Clearly, there has to be some adaptation to the politics of the left to take account of the way the working class has changed, in particular, the growth of white-collar workers, the growth of women in the work force and so on. Basically the things the New Left was addressing. I do not think these changes are about a fundamental class transformation. It does not require complete abandonment of aspirations, which depend on working-class supremacy or ascendancy. In some ways, I think the case for a working-class victory or ascendancy is stronger because you have a more educated working class. The working class is more crucial at every level of production. So the case for industrial democracy and self-management is much stronger now.

Why was the socialist left defeated in the Labour Party? And are there spaces left in the Labour Party for them?

There are two aspects in this. Why was the socialist left defeated in the sense of

why did it not win? Then, having been defeated, in the sense of having not won, how was it then blamed for the electoral defeat of labour? Not only did it not win ground, but it was driven into the ground and it has been a victim of revenge. We need to distinguish those two points.

Firstly, why didn't it win? I think it did not win because of the structural constraints on a leftist activism. The fact that the party is really ultimately the parliamentary representation of the union means that its power structure has within it a bias in favour of the power of the unions, in particular the union leadership. That gives it an in-built conservatism - an alliance between the union leadership and the parliamentarian leadership will ultimately determine the power struggle of the party and the left will only momentarily ever win power within the unions unless it has its own party, because it is in this vicious circle. In other words, it cannot actually change the party without its own party.

So, that is the structural reason why it cannot win and then, having lost, the right defined history. The party had obviously been divided in the battle between the left and the right and the divisions were the main reasons why the party lost. But the right put a spin on that and said well, it was the left who caused the divisions and hence it is the left to blame for labour's electoral defeat, while everybody in the party and in the unions wants a victory. The left was blamed and became the leper of the labour movement. But that was a defeat of a rather superficial kind, and it did not mean people stopped believing in the left. Now you still have a lot of people who still believe in the left, but do not have the confidence to say so.

Are unions still close to Blair despite the fact that structurally unions no longer have the same power that they used to have in the Labour Party constitutionally?

Yes, they still have crucial areas of influence in the party. Blair is not emotionally, intellectually or ideologically close to them. *De facto* in the structure, he still depends on their support because they still have power to block dissent and when there is a powerful dissenting force, he needs them. But he is not close to them. If he is to get their support he has to deliver them certain things. So they are definitely still a force to be reckoned with.

How has the issue of clause 4 and the limitations on the unions as well as the appearance of Blair being anti-worker really been received by the unions?

I think you have to clearly distinguish what happened before the election and after. Before the election people were just so desperate to get rid of Mrs Thatcher that they were prepared to do anything. They were prepared to kiss Tony Blair's ass. So getting in clause 4 or accepting constraints on the unions was all part of winning. It is almost like when somebody gets divorced, there is trauma that leads to handing over the problem to a lawyer. Well, in a sense, after the 1992 election when labour lost, people were so traumatised that when these guys, Tony Blair and Peter Mansel, came forward saying, 'We can win. We're like a lawyer, we've got the technique', people just said. 'Please! We will do whatever you want, just win!' So they gave the party over to these technicians and now they want their party back; the people want the party back. There is now much more resistance. It is a different scenario now. I am not exaggerating, it is not a kind of militancy on the streets, but there is more careful assessment and more disgruntlement.

What is the current state of the left in Britain today outside of the labour party? What kind of struggles are they engaged in?

There are a number of things. There is the kind of direct action movement that you've probably heard about, with people taking direct action against genetically modified food, against roads (the big roads programme), against second runways, airports, and a lot of environmental issues. There are quite a few strikes going on that get support - there is some action around hospitals, some action around jobs. There are a lot of daily survival issues - people forming credit unions, in certain instances forming co-operatives - that kind of 3rd sector stuff. There is quite a lot of work on debt. There has been this huge demonstration around debt.

Where do you think all these things are leading to? Is there some kind of leadership being thrown up that can bring a coherence to all these struggles? Or is it all fragmented?

I say it is still very fragmented. I would not say there is any kind of leadership emerging. There are lots of different constituencies, different kinds of leaderships. The young, direct-action people will generate their own leadership. There are people leaving the Labour Party (or being expelled from the Labour Party) who produce a certain kind of leadership. I do not think you can talk about a coalescing really. Through *Red Pepper* we are trying to encourage that sort of coalescing, but it is quite a big uphill task. If a New Left emerges in Europe it

could be quite significant for Britain, but I do not know if there are any signs of that.

Does the left take the multi-ethnic and racial dimensions in Britain seriously?

Increasingly, yes. Increasingly, because black people are organising themselves, not just the political groups in the black community. Families have been victims of racist murders or racism in the police (e.g. the Steven Lawrence inquiry). If you had gone to this meeting on Saturday, it was a very clear example. You would have got a very clear sense of anti-racist issues, the distinctive problems facing the black communities and how these are very much part of the left. But it has been mainly the black organisations that have made it part of the left.

What are the issues at stake in the women's movement?

It's really difficult to talk clearly about a women's movement. There are lots of different women's initiatives, women's projects. In terms of the debates going on, one of the main issues for a socialist feminist is to assert the distinctive, unmet needs of working-class women. There is a way in which middle-class women have gained a lot though the struggles of feminism and working-class women have gained in terms of recognition of gender issues. However, a lot of their needs - in terms of pay, conditions, child care - and problems facing their daily lives are not really recognised.

There has been a wealth of socialist grassroots experiences and experiments that you have documented. Tell us about the Greater London Council experience. What were its accomplishments, its setbacks and the strategic lessons that can be learned from this?

Well, that is a big question. The Greater London Council (GLC) was the government of London until Mrs. Thatcher abolished it, which may seem very odd for people who come from a country which has a written constitution. Britain's constitution is unwritten, so in theory, it is within the power of the government to abolish another government. What the GLC represented when it existed, under Ken Livingston, was the use of a body to ensure redistribution. Its basic structure of taxation was redistributive in the sense that it taxed rich people in Hampstead and the city and provided services for the whole of London, people living in poor areas as well as the rich. So it was a redistributive body in the way of the social democratic settlement after the War. What Ken Living-

ston's GLC did, and I was part of it, was really to show that public resources could be managed in a different way; they could be managed democratically. The people could manage them with much more participation, whether it was through grant aiding or local popular organisations or through industrial democracy. It illustrated a different way of running the state, running public resources. That was one of the main things it did.

It also pursued the redistributive policies in a more radical way, like 'Fare is fair', which tried to provide free transport but in the end was judged illegal by the courts. It also responded very directly to the various needs of communities in London. It moved away from the old idea that the working class is undifferentiated, to recognising the needs of women, minorities, and gays and lesbians. It responded to the pluralism of growing up in the 1960s and 1970s and also to the ways in which people had inherited and been shaped by the provisions of the 1945 to 1950 government, the welfare state. Their expectations rose and they demanded more than just the basics, and the GLC began to respond to these demands in terms of art and music, childcare and adult education. It just provided a better quality of life.

Could you tell us a bit more about public participation in this experience?

In a sense the notion of state intervention and state provision has been to some extent discredited by neo-liberalism. It has exploited the failures and limits of it. The New Left had been developing its own critique, as I said earlier, stressing new forms of democracy and participation that would lead the people to feel that the state (its resources and elected representatives) was part of their state. The only way in which public redistribution, taxation and all these things can be rehabilitated is by very, very strong emphasis on participatory processes. In Brazil, for example, there is the participatory budget. In the GLC we began with the participatory process. We did not do it around the budget, but we did it around planning of land and economic development. We built the process around local movements and people. So, participation was key to making redistribution legitimate and then opening up the whole machinery of government. The county or town hall became a resource for the people rather than representing authority against the people.

What about the development of technology in this experience?

Well, one of the main things was to link the technological resources and know-

how to universities and technical colleges, with the mixture of technological needs and know-how of local trade unions, people, movements, tenants, groups and so on. A network of technology centres was set up. Have you seen a book on the GLC called *The Taste for Power*? That book contains a lot about this.

What was the Lucas Aerospace experience all about and what does it mean for unionism today?

Its main importance was in applying both trade union bargaining and proper valuation of workers' capacities as workers, not just as wage earners, but producers who understood the technology, the markets and labour process. It was based on a collective assertion of workers' capacities for self-management. But it was also showing a transitional strategy for achieving that, initially, through a bargaining process that would require the state to back it up. It illustrated a way of making public industries democratic. It made concrete workers' control and ownership. It, potentially anyway, tried to succeed but it did not because of the conservative labour government. It emanated in a way out of the critique of old-style nationalisation and a belief that public ownership was necessary, but it was insufficient, and therefore the knowledge of the workers was needed to guide the way the industry was managed. They actually knew the different options. In a way it was really trying to get into the details of production and trying to apply social and moral criteria in actual investment and product decisions. It was a socialisation of production which went deeper than matters of ownership.

What are the lessons for unions?

One is the question of how far a trade union should get involved in these issues without weakening its basic defensive function. There was a certain weakening that took place. I think that was a problem. The other issue is what kind of relationship was required with the political parties. The goals of Lucas Aerospace could not be achieved on their own.

You have tried to locate these struggles from below in a new framework about the politics of knowledge. Can you explain this to us?

I suppose that socialism, the idea of an economy based on need, does make certain assumptions about who is able to assess social need. Who measures social need? How are mechanisms decided on to meet these needs? Historically,

the formulation of socialism did coincide with the dominance of an orthodox, positivistic view of science, which tended to presume knowledge and hence social knowledge as well as knowledge of physical science could be codified and law-like, and hence centralised. Therefore, you had an easy move from social need to socialisation to the state. To rethink the social, you have to rethink knowledge and draw on the rethinking that has gone on about knowledge that derives from experience, from tacit knowledge. I think this also provides you with better tools to combat the right. The right has always pointed to the practical knowledge of the entrepreneur and has always pointed out that the state cannot second-guess the entrepreneur, which is true. But what I would argue that the New Left, the social movement left, has shown is that practical knowledge can be shared, socialised and can be practically organised through democratic processes. In a sense, a non-positivistic view of knowledge that values knowledge stemming from experience is a very powerful justification for participation, because it means participation does not just rest on moral and political commitment, but a recognition of the importance of practical knowledge for the efficiency, for the good working of the system to meet social needs and the identifying of the best mechanisms to meet those needs. It is the harnessing of the capacities of workers to meet those needs. That is it very broadly.

Can we really organize an alternative society based on participation? Forcing people to participate could lead to a 'barrack socialism'?

I suppose it depends on levels of participation. Clearly, people do not have to participate. But there must be mechanisms whereby people could make contributions and participate in decisions that affect them. Often this can be more efficient and less time consuming than not participating, because sometimes not being able to participate leads to bad decisions, conflict and a lot of time being wasted in hierarchies. In a sense, what I am arguing for is also being argued for by management theorists, but they presuppose an ultimate hierarchy controlling the system. But beneath them, they presume, there is a participatory process in which the knowledge of the workers is made use of and is brought into action. I suppose I am arguing you can have a process that is participatory without it being based on endless meetings. I mean you can design relationships in a company or in a project that avoid all the blockages that a hierarchy can produce. I am not arguing for participation in an artificial sense. It is more a form of management, at least in the workplace, and then there would have to be other forms of participation. We are really talking about designing forms of management that are feasible. If you look at participation from this point of view, then

you are not going to arrive at barrack socialism. Rather, you will be looking at participation from the point of view of the most effective ways to involve people's knowledge, skills and experience, and how this is best expressed. This will not be through endless meetings, but through giving people autonomy to pursue projects and take decisions. So socialism would also require basic equality and without it socialism would be phony and very limited.

In your research you have observed the emergence of new political formations that are not necessarily in the classical vanguard mould. Can you tell us how they are different and how they have practised their politics?

I think at the moment they have not really emerged in a consolidated way. The original ideas, like in *Beyond the Fragments*, came from the women's movement and Lucas Aerospace, which has shown the value of a federal form of organisation that presumed a sort of autonomy for different active parts but yet some basic coordination. Now that has not yet really given rise to a new political structure. The Greens in Germany, although I do not know enough about them, are not a vanguard party and I do not know to what extent they have broken with being a traditional parliamentary force. The weight of parliament has rather constrained their innovative capacities. Then there is the Dutch Green Left which has also experimented and has moved away from being a traditional parliamentary party. People are active in social movements rather than the party, but they come to the party to make connections with other social movements. I think it is getting somewhere. And there is also the Brazilian Worker's Party. I think the link with other social movements is crucial and the party has a certain modesty about its own role. So, I am not sure if there is an organisational form, but there are a lot of theoretical insights into the limits of the party and the closeness to social movements. So, even as an electoral party, there is a need to be close to social movements.

What is the character of the centre-left governments in Europe today?

They are slightly different. Blair is different. Schroeder has imitated Blair in terms of electoral image, but Schroeder is under too many constraints from a party that is still social democratic, in the sense of believing in redistribution and public intervention. The president in Italy is a bit like Blair in that he has been put on the defensive. In his case, he has been put on the defensive by the collapse of Eastern Europe and hence the need to say we are not really communist. On the other hand, because the left is quite strong in Italian society, he has had to pursue

a redistributive path, although not adequately so. I do not think any of them have adopted neo-liberalism to the extent that Blair has. I have said a bit about Blair's project. The German SPD and Jospin's project in France pursue traditional social democratic goals in a much more deregulated economy. They have all the limits of social democracy, but they do not know how to mobilise powers beyond those of the state and they are quite limited in terms of what they can do in terms of a deregulated state. They are looking to establish some kind of European state as a means of re-establishing public regulation.

Don't you think social democracy is really dead? Given the structural changes in Western European economies, like the introduction of the Euro through monetarist adjustment policies and the mobility of capital, can you really talk about social democracy?

I think it is in transition. It can't operate purely at a national level. But in a way there is a battle for the European state. Will the European entity be a single market (what Thatcher wanted) or will it be a European state with redistribution across Europe, public intervention across Europe and so on? The future of social democracy I think lies at the European level with the European state. Whether or not it can do that, I am not sure.

Do you think European economic and political integration holds out prospects for socialist advance?

Not in itself. I think socialists need to and are battling for the kind of political instruments and state that would enable the left and labour movements to exert some kind of countervailing force against capital, which has gained from European integration. So far, European integration has been a capital-led project, but it is not inherently thus. It is a battleground.

What, in your opinion, are the challenges and prospects for socialism in the 21st century?

One of the basic challenges is to develop the mechanisms of social regulation, control and democracy in a globalised economy, in which capital and forces of injustice and inequality are so mobile. A big challenge is to develop those international mechanisms. A second challenge is to relegitimate public intervention given the massive attack it came under from the neo-liberal right. Public intervention has been morally discredited and this has to be relegitimated. I

think the other thing is to achieve new forms of unity within popular movements and the working class broadly, in a period when a big part of radicalisation is the reassertion of distinct identities of different groups and components of the working class. Some of the groupings have common identities and interests. Can they find a distinct unity that is not homogenising, but a source of power? The other challenge is to find the right forms of political agency, which will be multi-faceted. It will have to be based on different levels of representation and varied agency. Finally, when we think about action within structures of production and distribution - in a sense if you think about the state as coordination - we need to find mechanisms of coordination from below.

Quaderni del Carcere

Rome,
imperial heaven.
Dreams of the past
shock the present.

The greatest marvel
an original intellectual edifice.
Constructed in the midst
of fascist cruelty.

An unshackled wisdom.
Praxis reborn,
a nucleus for
Democratic Communism.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Fausto Bertinotti

General Secretary Communist Party Rifondazione (Italy)

What were the influences and experiences in your life that led you into Communist politics and when did this happen?

I was part of a generational experience. In Italy in the 1960s there was an anti-fascist movement, which triggered very big street fights. This struggle resulted in workers and the new generation meeting for the first time. Later this movement was called 'The Movement of the T-shirts with Stripes' because the young generation was wearing T-shirts in those days. The young people came to understand and know politics as active practice. Some of us went into the leftist parties and union movements. At that time, the union movement started a new social practice, which we called 'articulated negotiation'. Articulated negotiation means practice inside each working place, but it is strongly qualified politically and ultimately informed by power objectives and aims. These two experiences - the anti-fascist street fights and the coordination and the collaboration with working-class struggle - built up the basis of what became the communist task for me. In addition to these elements there was also a third element that characterised our path. The third element was an internationalist vision and an internationalist task. First, there was Cuba and then the Vietnam struggle, which inscribed communist culture and communist militancy on our consciousness.

In the 20th century the Soviet or Third International generation of Communist Parties in the world had a very important role defined for the General Secretary of the Communist Party, and in the main, it sometimes created a problem (namely, the cult of the personality). Rifondazione is a post-Soviet party and we are very interested to know what is the role and function of the General Secretary and how that relates to the collective of the party.

The theme is very complicated because we live in a society in which the process of delegation is manifesting and affirming itself. The Italian situation is living through a downturn. If the history of the 1960s and 1970s was one of participation, mass protests, and the construction of forms of direct democracy, then the history of the 1980s and 1990s has been turning all of this upside down. We are facing a renewed attack of the capitalist market and a reaffirmation of liberal

ideology that promotes the practice of individual delegation. Moreover, mass communication has reduced politics to a spectacle. In other words, it has become theatre. Essentially, the prominence of political leaders has been growing at the expense of participatory democracy, and this is supported by the hegemony of the capitalist enterprise and mass-communication industry. This phenomenon is unfortunately prevalent in each party and even our party is contaminated by this phenomenon.

I think this tendency must be corrected. First, we have to acknowledge that it exists. Secondly, we have to build up new forms of democracy and democratic life within the party. Thirdly, we have to give primacy in party action to building and constructing mass movements. The only real way to fight liberalism is penetrating (or even going behind) social conditions and mass pacification, which is unfortunately the main process winning today.

In your opinion, what does it mean to be a Communist today?

Today it is more difficult to define what it means to be a Communist than before. First of all, the difficulty is determined by the failure and the collapse of the Eastern European countries. Secondly, the difficulty derives from the deep change and impact of the capitalist way of production. The world has changed and the basic problem, the major problem, for the forces that do not want to accept the existing state of things is exactly the question of redefining what it means to be a Communist. For this reason we call ourselves Re-foundation, because we think it is necessary to be Communists and Communists must rebuild the theory and the practice of Communists in this new, changed world.

The starting point could be the criticism of a globalizing capitalistic process. Included in this is the radical critique of neo-liberal politics, which is critical to what Lenin called unique thought. That is to say, the starting element to be Communist is to reformulate an actual critique of the modern capitalist economy. It is no longer sufficient to be generally against capitalism. We need to be against this capitalism, the capitalism of the post-Fordist phase and a capitalism of a world in which we increasingly see its failures.

Of course, this is not sufficient. To be a Communist we must propose breaking with or going beyond capitalist society and ultimately the construction of a different society with different social relations. A society of liberation from salaried or wage labour, which today is still a need rather than a theory and a

finished practice. Hence, we can feel very strongly the need to be Communists more than the capacity of being fully Communist.

Can you give us a historical background to the party?

Well, the historical reference of our party has to be seen in the history of the workers' movement of this century. Our roots are in Marx's Manifesto, written 150 years ago, and the history of class struggle, of the relation between classes. In this historical perspective there are no models and there are no revolutionary theoreticians that we must choose over or against others.

Let me explain. We do not think we can choose today to have the heritage of Lenin more than that of Rosa Luxemburg or Mao or others. In reality we must go through all the history of the workers' movements and of plural Marxisms to find the history of the struggles and ideas of this century. What we need to face is a new phase and for this we must critically assess our roots and the history of where we come from.

In the Italian context there is a rich Communist history and tradition. We would like to know what are the specific roots of Rifondazione within this movement? And to what extent has Euro-communism and the wider left impacted on the formation of Rifondazione?

Well, as you said, the history of the Italian working-class movement is very rich and it is rich in terms of division too. We have references to the global working-class movement in this century, not just Italian ones. At the same time, we have the heritage of the Italian working-class movement. In particular, the history of the working class and Communist movements in Italy after the War (after the resistance and the victory against Nazi fascism) have been a great influence for us.

Within this history, the Communist Party had a peculiar role, but we cannot see this as a homogenous history. Within the same history of the Communist Party we had political cultures, social practices and political theories that were very different. But our investigation is interested in the leftist currents of socialism, which in Italy has a peculiar history, a very class-based history which is often tied up with a left revisionism that is anti-capitalist and radical. In the same way, we are interested in the experience of political history coming out of traditional working-class parties in the great mass struggle of 1968-69. We are interested in

experiences that sometimes gave birth to political subjects and in many cases to political cultures. Let us say, we are interested in a very wide spectrum of history, political cultures and concrete experiences. Naturally, in this there are some theoretical and political tendencies that have particular influences in our political thought.

Without doubt we can say that there is a very strong influence of Italian theoreticians like Antonio Gramsci. He is particularly important because his history is that of a Marxist deeply tied to Italian culture. Basically, we are interested in him particularly as a theoretician of revolution in the Western world. This is not a unique or exclusive choice. It is not the choice of Gramsci against other thinkers, but his work constituted an original approach that had a particular influence on us in the same way in which the particular culture of the mass Communist Party influenced us. That is to say, a Communist Party that refuses the vanguardist choice and proposes itself instead as the organisation of the masses. In other words, it transforms the masses into protagonists of the political struggle.

One of the political categories that most influences our research is the notion of hegemony. This is an idea about the transformation of society; of going beyond the capitalist society, that sees absolutely the masses as a first actor, the first protagonist of this change.

Could we talk of new insights from Gramsci's thought that can be used today in the globalised world? Put differently, is Gramsci relevant in a globalised capitalist world?

Well, I think yes. I think that he is still very interesting. First, the Gramscian category of hegemony is particularly relevant to the other Gramscian category of civil society. Linked to the latter category is the idea that the party is absolutely necessary for the revolution, but the party cannot think itself as the unique subject of the revolution. When the party decides that there is the possibility of starting the transformation of society, it has to be part of a continual relation between civil society and the party, in which neither commands the other. Society does not command the party. The party must be able to have an autonomous point of view, which affirms a class autonomy that escapes from the common sense induced by the force of bourgeois categories. On the other hand, the party cannot impose its own dominance on society, which would impoverish the capacity of expression of society both in terms of the class conflict as well as the personal creativity of its members.

In this sense, the Gramscian lesson is still an actual lesson. The fact that Gramsci had a perception of the danger of a bureaucratisation of the Soviet Union was informed very much by his original cultural and political elaboration. In addition, there are some methodological lessons of Gramsci that are still very important. One of the lessons is written in *Americanism and Fordism*. Naturally, we could discuss in great depth the analysis written in that book. It contains a theoretical concession to a kind of neutrality of technology that was absolutely denied by history. But the approach, the analysis of the ideas, the capacity to investigate labour, work, the labour organisation and technology, the culture and even religion of people, gives us a model of social investigation. In other words, this capacity to investigate in such a complex way labour and the culture of the population presents us with a model of social investigation that should be very important to incorporate today.

Gramsci investigated in a critical way the globalisation of capitalist production and the different ways in which capitalist production is organising itself around the world. He did not resolve the matter, but gave us very important lessons in terms of which to build up an effective criticism of capitalism of our time.

How has the Party linked the ecological and gender challenges, both theoretically and practically, to the challenge of socialism?

I think that it is correct to put the gender and ecological issues together, even if they talk about different issues. To us they pose the same order of questions and issues. How and why the class contradiction must conjugate, tie up, and connect with the gender contradiction and with the contradiction between environment and development? For us the aim of this is to build an alternative to neo-capitalism in a context in which the great provision of Marx i.e. the struggle of the working class was also about freeing humanity is now more problematic. This is not just the result of the real experiences of the struggle of the working class against capitalism, but because new questions have come to the fore within society.

The first question is the gender question. For a long time the workers' movement formulated the gender question as a women's question; the workers' movement thought in terms of the emancipation of women. This approach, however, within the concrete history of the working-class movement did not remove the predominance of a patriarchal culture with men predominating over women. It has only been in the last few decades that we have learned to listen to the critique

of the various feminist movements. But in concrete practice, we are very far from a satisfactory answer to this issue. In the concrete forms of our organisation, that is at the last Congress of the Party (Rifondizione), we engaged in an exercise of self-criticism regarding the mono-sexual character of the party. Subsequently, we have not taken many steps forward.

In short, we can say that we learned to recognise the nucleus or cell of truth proposed by feminist criticism. At the same time, we have approached the gender question, both as an element of reform of the party and as an element of changing our political platform. But we cannot say that we have an adequate answer to the question yet. From the practical point of view of class struggle, the relation between the class contradiction and the environmental and development contradiction went much further. We believe the productivist idea of development and an industrialisation path of development, apart from robbing and denigrating nature and apart from stealing from the Third World, is not able to guarantee full employment any more, not even in the richest and most industrialised countries in the world.

It is obvious that without changing the development model and the development path, the employment problem is not resolvable. On the basis of this general consideration we have taken significant steps forward in ensuring that the environmental issues constitute the basic issues confronting our party and its objective of social struggle. There are many instances in which we have been concretely taking action (in communities, against pollution sites, against violence against nature, and against very advanced technology). We have been fighting for balanced development of the environment. For example, we have been one of the few forces in Italy fighting against the high-speed train system because of the environmental impact it would have. Similarly, we have led the fight against nuclear energy and pollution emanating from production.

What is the Party's strategic approach to advancing socialism today in Italy?

I do not think we can formulate this question like that anymore. I think the perspective of socialist construction in one country does not exist any more. This phase of capitalist development (e.g. globalisation of the capitalistic process, the interdependence of the process, the great financing aspect of the economy, the lack of force of the nation state, the dominance of multinationals, the military reorganisation around one power in the world) suggests that it is no longer possible to think about socialist transformations in just one country. On

the contrary, we can say something even more radical, that you can no longer think in a concrete way about an alternative politics to neo-liberalism in just one country.

To realise alternative politics and to work for the construction of socialism, we need to realise elements of autonomy from the capitalist and globalisation process. To realise this autonomy we need to work with a new approach to the geo-political and the masses. We have to start thinking in terms of the size of populations, civilizations and histories. All these themes can have the force and strength to get away from the dominance of globalisation and to realise a different social model. This means reformulating your question: instead of socialism in the Italian context we need to think about this question at the European level.

At the same time, there exists an objective maturity of socialism. That is to say, the nature of the capitalist globalisation process proposes objectively the problem of going beyond this capitalistic model. However, from a subjective point of view there is an immaturity regarding this question. This exists at two levels. First, theoretically we have not matured a new body of thinking about socialist transformation. Second, there is a subjective immaturity in response to the question: Who is today's subject of transformation? It is not sufficient to say the working class. It is not sufficient, it is not enough even in Europe, because who is the working class today in Europe? The working class here has suffered a process of very radical change. Naturally, because we are communists, we do not think the working class has disappeared or that class conflict is over, but we have the duty to see that the social class composition has changed radically.

So, the first problem relates to how to recompose a working class today, which is very fragmented by the capitalist restructuring process and divided into varying social forces and largely without self-consciousness. Therefore, there is a giant problem of the recomposition of class-consciousness and of a reconstruction of class-consciousness of itself and for itself. At the same time, there is the problem of how to connect the liberation struggle of the working class with the liberation struggle of gender and with a different development model able to valorise, and not de-valorise, the environment, all within a general framework able to change the relations between north and south.

To advance in this research we need to propose an immediate objective, which can also not be reached in one country but should at least refer to a European

context, of constructing an alternative to the neo-liberal project. Without an alternative to neo-liberal politics, Europe faces the possible destiny of disappearing as a civilisation. In reality, Italy faces two different roads as does Europe. One road has a possibility of looking back to its own history, the history of ideas. I am talking about Christianity, different Marxists, and the history of class struggles. Europe could react to the attempt of demolition that is written in globalisation by building a new social development model, a social model that takes into account its own experience. Its own experience, for example, of the welfare state, working class conquests and the organisation of democracy to face this challenge. A new social model that can defend these conquests and innovate. The other road is to progress towards the demolition of European civilisation and substitute its own experiences with the North Americans' model. That means a very low-protection social model with very high flexibility, mobility and limited democracy. I think this is what we are facing, these two roads.

If the forces of the European left want to maintain the open investigation and research for a socialist alternative, we must fight and win the battle against the North American model and build up a new European social model.

To advance this strategic perspective that you outline, what are the concrete programmatic thrusts on the party agenda or programme?

The first problem is the employment problem. This requires very deep reflection. Unfortunately we do not have time, because since the period after the War the struggle of the working masses around work was very much about full employment but today in Europe you are talking about 20 million unemployed people; in Italy we have 12% unemployment (there is a region in the south of Italy where unemployment is between 25-30%). This social reality is new. It was not known before and it will continue even with the presence of social democratic government's in Europe, because the main line of these governments is still a neo-liberal line. They have tried to reduce inflation, to reduce the deficit of the state budget and they considered employment a dependant variable in this politics.

Our first aim is to fight against unemployment, because unemployment produces other negative consequences. Unemployment reduces the negotiating power of the workers and encourages precarious labour. At the same time, the state must be able to organise state intervention in strategic sectors, to realise

programmatic forums (e.g. program forums of development, of industrial policy and of territorial policy). The struggle all over Europe, apart from bits in France, is still to be waged. In these areas we face an absolutely opposite line (i.e. the line of liberalisation, privatisation to finance industries and enterprises, full freedom of capital movements and to smash whatever form of control the state has in the economy).

So, the first aim of the politics of fighting unemployment is to reverse this tendency and to rebuild new forms of public intervention in the economy. The state must be able to organize state intervention in strategic sectors. This includes realising economic activities that the market cannot and will not activate. For example, the market will not build up socially useful work related to the environment. Likewise, it will not realise enterprises based on the value of culture, for example, in artistic production. We are talking about all social and economic activities that the market does not activate because the markets want immediate profits. This new state intervention is one of the leading elements of a new economic politics that we want.

The second fundamental basic element is the redistribution of work to modify the relation between labour, life and society. We propose to generalise the reduction of labour time, of work time, with the same salary. These are very difficult objectives to achieve, very difficult aims to reach. We almost reached a compromise with the government to reduce the working time to 35 hours a week. The fact that this law was not implemented has been one of the reasons why we split with the majority of government. We believe that without a reduction of working time you cannot fight unemployment.

The reduction of working time is not simply useful to challenge unemployment, but is also an element of the new social motive that we want to change the relation between work and other human activities. It is a way to begin to discuss the division of labour between the sexes through the reduction of work time. You can activate a great campaign to modify the relation between the men and women, between production and social reproduction. However, the paradoxical thing in Italy is that it is not only the bosses against it, but also the unions. They are very tied up with the bosses in a social pact to guarantee the international competitiveness of Italian enterprises. Therefore the unions don't want to sacrifice this competitive model for a fundamental aim like a reduction in working time. Of course, we continue with this battle for new public intervention, work-time reduction and environmental development.

These are the main objectives, the main aims of the struggle against unemployment. Another objective is a defence and reform of the welfare state. In Italy, the direction of things is towards a welfare state for the poor, which means a welfare state that intervenes only in terms of health, pensions and assistance for those who are at a poverty level. Meanwhile they privatise all the interventions for those who are above the poverty minimum level. This transforms in a substantial way the welfare state and encourages private security. Naturally this is a gradual process of rolling back working class victories. For example, they limit pension levels and then push workers to have a parallel insurance scheme to compensate what has been taken away from public pensions. Thus, the tendency even in the welfare state is privatisation. Even in the education system we are seeing this trend towards privatized education. In the face of this tendency we must defend the universalistic charter of the welfare state (i.e., that everyone as citizens must receive social protection of pensions, health, and schooling for everybody, men and women).

The third question is the redistribution of wealth. The first issue was the fight against unemployment, the second was to defend and reform welfare states, and the third is redistribution. It is a fight for a more equal redistribution of wealth, which must express itself through salary politics and fiscal politics. This platform is not just attacked by the right wing but even from the centre left including the social democratic organisations, because they think it is incompatible with European integration and with the Maastricht Treaty. This objective of redistribution could change the parameters of the Maastricht Treaty.

If we can come back to the organised working class, what is the state of the organised working class, of the trade unions as well as the challenges that they are facing in Italy today?

As I was saying to you, we face two types of difficulties. This first is an objective problem, the second a subjective one. The objective one relates to the changing social composition of class and, if you like, the social composition of capital in the sense that it is obviously easier to fight with national enterprises than with multinationals. It is easier to fight against a national capitalism in which capitalist enterprises have a precise territory. The prices are here, the factories are here and they assume workers live in the same place. It is more difficult to fight a factory that is here, but can have other factories linked to it from all over the world and that can use a factory for social dumping. That is, localise production in a different country where the labour force costs less.

In the same way, it is more difficult to fight today with a working class that is more divided than yesterday. In the past the working class was concentrated in big factories and unified by the presence of big factories. This decomposition, this fragmentation has gone very deep. I am not saying that it is a natural process and neither is it necessary, but it is an enforced process. It is not natural and could be different, but the market and capitalist enterprises were able to impose this reorganisation. They have escaped or undermined whatever control and regulatory discipline existed, and have consciously worked towards the fragmentation and decomposition of the working class.

Today in Italy there coexists in the same factory, or rather production cycle, different relations of work for different workers. While these workers are in the same place and work alongside each other, they have different employment contracts. For example, casual contracts do not have a predetermined time or duration for employment and casual labour can easily be fired. Other contracts are linked with short periods of work time, others with contracts for youths and students, and all the contracts have very, very different natures, but all do the same work. Thus, the work relationships are absolutely different, their pay is different and their defences are different. Compared with workers in other factories, in the same production cycle, differences manifest again in terms of work conditions. Some work conditions and contracts set higher standards and some lower standards. Then there are core workers and then subcontracted workers who do not have a real contract with the factory.

It is this fragmentation that makes it so difficult to recompose unity. So there is an objective problem, but this objective problem is exalted and increases in relation to a subjective problem. The subjective problem is that the unions no longer think of themselves as representatives of working-class aims and objectives, but instead see themselves as a function of government. The unions behave as though they are part of the government and the state, and in a sense consider themselves to be the government of the factories. We call this relation between the factory, the state and the union 'concertation' or collaboration, and of course this means a lack of autonomy for the workers. So within this framework the social conditions of workers have worsened and strike statistics ironically reveal a decline in union activity. This says a lot about the orientation of the union movement.

However, there are also some unions, minor unions, especially in some sectors, like services, that are more combative, more militant and outside of this

collaboration and logic. In the service sector they are engaging in very important and massive struggles. But in the industrial sector workers are being tamed by job insecurity and the tradition of historical unionism is stronger. Sadly, this stands in the way of the organisation of the working-class struggle. This is one of the major problems that we face now.

How should the left view and approach European integration?

I have touched on it a bit, but I will say something specifically about it. I think Europe is a necessary dimension for our political action. Every day Europe is less an international political term, but is becoming for us a matter of internal politics. Naturally this European integration is dominated by capital and the banks. The integration process was informed by neo-liberal economic policies. The construction of one currency has been realised through a ferocious approach towards a reduction of the deficit of the state budget and of the general reduction of the debt of the states. To reach this aim social objectives have been sacrificed. Instead the main objective has been the stability of the currency. So European integration has been about the absolute predominance of monetarist policy, in such a way that today we have a unique currency, but not a unique democratic government of Europe. We have European money, but we do not have the political Europe. This has never happened in a modern state. There is a currency without a democratic government and this is the paradox of Europe. Europe is an economic giant and a political dwarf.

This is true both on the economic side and towards the United States of America. Political Europe is absolutely dependent on the USA. Therefore, for us, Europe is an indispensable and vital terrain of struggle that we cannot simply dismiss. We cannot just say this Europe is not good, therefore I withdraw in Italy. If Europe is bad, Italy will be even worse. So this is the first round of the fight and also a round in which we can attempt to build and construct an alternative. This is a phenomenon we must investigate with more attention. There are young movements (e.g. youth, unemployed, etc.) and there are resistance struggles of workers vis-à-vis the dismantling of the welfare state. There is an alternative left that is beginning to take its own first steps.

Also there is a new condition that prevails in Europe. Almost all the European governments, apart from Spain and Ireland, are social democratic governments (i.e. centre-left governments). We cannot have faith in these governments. Actually, we cannot delude ourselves and surrender to these governments.

Instead, for us the problem is to understand if and how we can intervene inside, within the contradiction of social democracy, taking into account the particularities it has within each country. That is Jospin in France is not Blair. Within social democracy different forces exist and the capacity to force and condition the governments through movements is different in each country. The challenge for alternative left forces in Europe is to construct powerful movements and to propose an alternative platform. However, this is going to be very difficult.

How does this relate to the recent joint appeal of leftist parties regarding the European election?

Well, the joint appeal for the European election is exactly in the framework that I have been talking about now. Without a doubt it is a step forward in this direction. Over the last few years we have taken up important initiatives around leftist unity with European leftist groups, the communist parties and leftist parties in Europe. We have focused on work-time reduction and to this extent we had a demonstration in Paris for the reduction of working time to 35 hours. This joint appeal builds on this momentum of united action and begins to open up the possibility of building a common platform in Europe that goes beyond the existing differences between these parties. We are committed to ensuring that coordination among leftist European forces is built and that a common initiative is advanced.

Can you tell us about why the Party split and what lessons can be learned from this?

Now, around this split, things are quite simple in reality. The division came about because some of our comrades, those that left the party, believed that whatever the government's agenda was, the party must be inside the government. On the contrary, we thought that we must remain in the majority of the government so that we could take up any chances to start shifting the politics of the majority. We made a lot of sacrifices, thinking that the shift in politics towards reform could start. Instead the government and the majority closed the door to this reform perspective, and we decided that we could not be an accomplice of a Conservative Party and essentially lose the perspective of the alternative. So we had to choose either to stay in government and renounce indefinitely the construction of an alternative or, alternatively, maintain the perspective of an alternative and break with the majority and their moderate policy choices. The differences in the Party and the split were exactly around this point, this issue,

this debate.

What are the prospects for socialism in the 21st Century?

I just want to say this. The new century and the new millennium cannot start without the socialist question being on the agenda. The tragedies and mistakes that accompanied the history of the working-class movements in the 20th century must be analysed very seriously and with courage. The tragedies or errors must be confronted so that we can solve the problem that led to the creation of the working-class movements. This is the question of liberation from exploitation and alienation. This challenge is being proposed for resolution in the new century.

The Future

With the passage of time
like night to day
my consciousness has changed.

Days of political adventure
are ending
like an old wine
my beliefs are matured.

The flame of political commitment
burns brighter
like the bull fighter
I want to confront history

But, with the patience
of a gardner
I want to contribute history.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Pietro Ingrao

Former Central Committee member of the Italian Communist Party

Most people in the world believe that Euro-Communism was monolithic. From our perspective in the SACP and the study some of us have done we could see different strands. In your example we could see a left-wing current in Euro-Communism which has inspired our own efforts for left renewal in South Africa.

I want to thank you very much for your kind words to me. These words are encouraging to me, because they are proof of the fact that from far away, even though I have never been to South Africa, there is a thread which helps us communicate in this vast, diversified world. This gives me strength. So thank you, not because I am flattered by what you have said, but because international relations are very important to me. Also it is important to me, because I come from a past experience where the various forces of the past communist movement and labour movement were very strong. Right from when I started struggling in the communist movement there was, as there is now, a crisis in these international relations. What we have left behind us is a very serious defeat relating to the fall of the Soviet Union and what it represented. I must say very sincerely that the Communist Movement of Western Europe as well as the Italian movement are undergoing a very serious and deep crisis with consequences in our country as well. We do feel the need to consider the reasons for this defeat and to understand the major changes that have occurred within capitalism. I have thought about this a lot.

You have traveled around the world. I do not know to what extent you have been able to find out about the big changes which have occurred in the way capitalism operates. I must sincerely say in a frank and brutal way that we have been defeated (first and foremost with the collapse of the Soviet Union) and our present effort must be to understand why capitalism has prevailed and what are the changes which have occurred in the capitalist mode of production. And hence we must understand how to construct a subjectivity against capitalism as well as a movement of the world's left, linking these two aspects of the struggle. I am afraid that what I have to say about Italy is not very comforting. But the fact that we meet from such a distance means that these ideas we have in our minds can withstand the storm as well.

When and why did you begin to involve yourself in Communist politics?

I began in the 1930s when I was a student. I had grown up during the fascist regime. I believed in fascism up to a certain age, but after the war in Ethiopia I began doubting. That was a big event among young Italian people. I began talking with my peers, people my own age, and began developing a political perspective. Before that my big love was to study literature, poetry. I loved the new poets who were coming up in Europe, France, Germany and Italy. I loved cinema and still am a big lover of it. I am convinced I understand more about cinema than I understand about politics. I am sure of that. Well, at the time film was a new art that we were discovering. So these were my two big passions, poetry and film.

For me things began to change with the Spanish War, which seemed to me to be a shameful war. It was waged by reactionary generals and priests to trample the new Spanish democracy. Finally, that war meant weapons were beginning to be used in Europe; Hitler was already in power in Germany. He started militarizing. So I began wondering what was going on in Europe and the world. I began meeting with other people. But because Italy was under a dictatorship we began meeting secretly with groups of young people here in Rome with different ideas (liberal democrats, socialists). At the beginning we even had some monarchists with us and there was a group of young communists. It would take a long time to tell you what we exactly knew about communism, but we did not know much except that communism in the Soviet Union at the time seemed to us as the expression of the suffering oppressed classes, workers and peasants mostly. We in our country saw the hard, terrible conditions of the peasants and workers. So we became involved in communism as an idea that would advance the masses of exploited and oppressed people, and would have the strength and force to create a mass movement to bring down Hitler and Mussolini.

Anyway, it was the Spanish War that rang the alarm loudest for me. The Spanish War put me on the alert, because it was a warning in advance as to what would happen. This war was about to burst out and we were moving towards a Second World War. I was born in 1915, the year when Italy joined the First World War, and I have a vague memory of that war. But Hitler made me forecast that an even more terrible war would come. So inside myself I felt that I could not accept this and had to do something about it. I even went through moments of great despair. In the spring of 1940, Hitler invaded Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and France. Italy took sides with Hitler, and joined the war. Hitler was about to cross

the Channel and invade Britain. So it seemed as though Hitler would dominate the whole world with his alliance with Japan. I remember very clearly those times; those were tragic moments. I really want to use this word tragic, because I saw my new ideas being defeated but together with others we felt that the only thing to be done was to fight. So I set aside poetry and film, though not entirely, and began getting involved in the political struggle. These were secret, illegal actions, of course. We formed the communist group, which then formed links with the Communist Party and then participated in the resistance against fascism and the war, which led to the war of fascism and then the defeat of the Germans in our country. When Hitler was defeated, a New World emerged. Once we defeated Hitler a conflict with America and Britain began; the Cold War began.

I don't know how old the two of you are. I am 83 and my best years were during the terrible years of the Second World War. You know how atrocious that was, but I know you have also been through very hard times and huge tragedies in your country as well. We had our party tragedies too. It was in 1936 that I understood I had to fight back and take sides.

Can you tell us how the Italian Communist Party tried to break with Stalinism?

Stalinism was a major event in the history of communism. I must say to you comrades when I began fighting fascism in the mid 1930s and took sides with communists, many important developments were happening inside the Italian Communist Party which ensured a break from Stalinism. First, in the work of comrades like Gramsci, we have had a strong awareness that there were peculiarities concerning the struggle for socialism in the West and particularly in Italy. In other words, we were convinced we could not do the same as they had done in Russia. In Italy we began work, which developed a lot during the Second World War and later, seeking the very specific and particular way in terms of which we could achieve socialism in our own country and in Western Europe. We worked very hard around this issue.

Second, the socialism we had in mind had to be implemented through democracy. This was an idea that was always with us. What we had in mind was a system of social alliances that would enable us to have a vast alliance. We also talked about an Italian way to socialism. We thought that in our country the road to socialism should have its own specific features. Furthermore, we tried to find out to what extent we could use the tools of parliamentary democracy. We worked to develop a very large system of alliances around the working class. We

took a new attitude around the whole question of religion, which was very different from our history and experience in the USSR. Not only did we take an open, tolerant position towards religion, but we went as far as to say an authentic and deeply-felt religious experience could lead people towards fighting for socialism. This is somewhat similar to the theology of liberation in Latin America. This is just a bird's eye view of the peculiarities and innovation in the road that we used. At one point we were talking about a third road to socialism that was different from both the USSR and social democracy, which was in line with specific features of Western European society.

This brings us to Eurocommunism. Eurocommunism was a formula which mentioned this possibility of a new road where the achievement of socialism or progress towards socialism was linked to developing democracy and to a peaceful way. We were strongly convinced we could not follow the same way as the USSR. But the experience of Eurocommunism was very fragile. It was more a statement of intention. It was never really implemented, and I think there were mistakes made, weaknesses on the part of Italian Communists and even more so on the part of our French comrades. Our Spanish comrades were still living in very difficult conditions at the time. I want to stress that we were different from others. We did not understand in time how serious some of the mistakes were (e.g. how mistaken some of the lines followed in the Soviet Union were). It was these wrong policies that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and to the deeper crisis of West European Communism.

There were some cases in which our voices were different from the Soviet Union, such as in the 1956 rebellion in Hungary, the 1968 aggression in Czechoslovakia, and the adventure in Afghanistan. We tried to think about these mistakes. I must say, however, that in 1956 we should have firmly condemned the Soviet aggression in Hungary, but we did not. We felt differently from Khrushchev at the time, but we did not understand how crucial the issue at stake was. In 1968 as well, we took a different position and an interesting one which condemned the invasion of Prague. Then the Soviet Union collapsed, which had repercussions for the Italian left and the Italian Communist Party.

The Italian Communist Party was not an elite party, but a mass party. It had millions and millions of militants and, faced with the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a crisis in the party. As a result the party split. The refounded Communist Party was founded after the split by the groups of communists who did not share the same views as the leaders of the PDS. But we must

acknowledge that the crisis concerned us all and the more difficult part started. I should also note that the Italian left has been part of a big labour movement and trade union movement, the CGIL, and the social democratic unions. This represented a major strength in our party's internal experience. But the unions are also going through a difficult predicament in Italy. Why?

In the last quarter of the century, looking at it from a European perspective, we have also experienced major capitalist innovation, which we describe as a transition from the Fordist capitalist model to a post-Fordist capitalist model. I am convinced that the cause of the defeat of the left in Europe depends not only on the collapse of the Soviet Union, but also on the fact that we did not understand the specifics of how the capitalist economy operates. Fordism was built on big concentrated factories and production sites with layers of relatively homogenous workers, who were together in the same territory. Whereas today we are faced with a capitalism that is characterised by flexible production, outsourcing, dispersing capitalist production units, a highly diversified social structure, and the possibility that capitalism may simultaneously use various fragments and segments of human labour in Italy, Malaysia, Vietnam and South America through information technology. This has led to a state of instability and precariousness of work and labour. In Europe the idea of a lifelong job has become obsolete. Instead of the big production sites there are all sorts of labour contracts, temporary workers, and unprotected work. Capitalists all over the world have their theories about flexible and adaptable labour which has to adapt to the requirements of capital. This is *the* major issue now dominating social conflict in Italy. The major issue we are faced with as communists is how to react and respond to this transformation of labour into something precarious. It makes it more difficult to unify the struggle and to create a collective awareness. It is my opinion that we are faced with the development of a new socialist perspective and maybe that is one of the issues we should address.

It would seem that EuroCommunism, when disengaging from Stalinism and the Soviet Experience, did in some senses fortify itself. One would have expected it to have been able to navigate changes in the world, even with the collapse of Eastern Europe and even the changes in capitalism. I'm still not clear what went wrong. I think that is the one issue. The other issue is that you, comrade Ingrao, were very embroiled in the innovation and change. We would like you to give us some sense of your own contributions and ideas.

On the question of Eurocommunism, my answer is that the attempt was too

superficial. It only went as far as meeting points among the leaders of the various parties (e.g. some joint events or demonstrations, some joint statements of intention). But we did not open up discussions between Italians, French and Spanish on the Soviet experience. For example, we held different views from the French about the Soviet experience. Nor did we have a common discussion on the new ways to confront Western capitalism. So, attempts at communication were mostly in the form of ephemeral statements and declarations. Our French comrades, in my opinion, were seriously lagging behind on the Soviet Union and their experience. On many occasions they fought against us and our positions in the Italian Communist Party and that remained a point of very serious difference between us. I think only very recently with this new generation of French communists have they reached a point of developing a serious and deep criticism of the Soviet experience.

Moreover, many of us argued for a pluralist notion vis-à-vis voices of the left. For us, for example, it was important that trade unions should be independent. It was of great value and of major importance that there were autonomous, independent mass movements and so on. We never came to a common discussion on these things and our strategies. We did not understand that starting from the early 1970s world capitalism would start to change. Let me add that we were also late in studying and understanding the experience of European social democracy. Even within the Italian Communist Party there was mistrust, a lack of knowledge, understanding and contacts about the experiences of social democrats in Sweden, Germany and Austria. And, honestly speaking, I had different ideas on many points. I was one of the comrades who began saying we should study these experiences, that they were not all negative experiences. For example, some social democratic experiences were about trying to enhance worker power in the workplace and so we had something to learn from this. The party understood this much, much later after things had already changed. Our French comrades considered it a kind of scandal to say you could learn from social democracy, so they had a closed attitude. This has been a weakness in redeveloping, in building up a new European left.

Also without a link to the German experiences, the Italians, French and Spanish could not have won, but we only understood this very, very late. As to my own position, to the extent that it was different within the party, there were big differences indeed, which developed during the course of the 1960s. At the time there was political conflict within the party, which reached its peak at the 6th Congress of the party in 1966, when there was open confrontation. In that debate

I stressed two things; I was fighting for two objectives.

First, I fought for freedom of dissent (i.e. freedom to disagree), in other words a free discussion within the party that should not remain within locked doors only with the leadership. The expression I used was the 'right to doubt', to be able to express one's disagreement without being pushed down on your knees by the party. I was defeated in that battle with consequences in that situation. This concerned my belief that we could not win the battle of communism without joining it to the battle for freedom and for grassroots participation. I was convinced that in our party the relationship between the leadership and the grassroots should be a very open one. I did not want the party to be like a church and that was one of the points in the conflict on which I was defeated.

The other point in our discussion concerned the socialist perspective in Italy. I will go through it briefly. I, with many other comrades, asserted that we should fight for a reform in which socialism was already embedded in the society, hence for a pattern of development that should include these new socialist elements. The other comrades were fighting these views of ours and they prevailed. In my opinion what they were pushing forward was a way to modernise capitalism. They argued capitalism in Italy was still backward. Therefore the task of communists was, first and foremost, to push capitalism forward so that there would be a modernisation of capitalism in our country. The other comrades and myself were suggesting a kind of development that should already include some form of socialist reforms.

Finally, this idea of the right to doubt was closely linked to the belief that we should strongly promote participation from below - grassroots participation. The party structures were at the time too rigid; there was too much leadership and command from the top without the possibility of developing dialectics and hence an inability to be innovative.

In your thesis, comrade Ingrao, how were these elements of socialism to be built because there was no prospect of the PCI getting into power? How was socialism going to be achieved?

I did not see, and I still do not see, the process as some things first and other things later (e.g. first you get to power and then you start reforms). I was convinced through our struggle that unless we developed an alliance of voices demanding certain reforms we would just not win. We would never get power. I

was convinced that the very achievement of power was linked to and resulted from such a process. In this perspective, to be more precise, I and other comrades who were struggling with me became convinced of the great importance of the achievements of workers' power in the workplace (i.e. the power to influence the organisation and management of the factory). I was convinced we would not win at parliamentary level without that process. So we were convinced that there was a link between greater powers at the workplace and in the community on the one hand and becoming a parliamentary majority on the other.

Do you still hold onto this perspective today in the light of globalisation?

Absolutely yes! Even though the effort is much more complicated nowadays, because when I was advocating these ideas the model I had in mind was the Fordist model of capitalism, hence with concentrated work sites. It was clear to see that you could develop workers' power at the workplace first. Second, in my view, the word 'communism' or 'socialism' is deeply linked to this idea of participation and autonomy of the workers. For me the word 'socialism' makes no sense unless it focuses first and foremost on what Marx described as the alienation of workers. Hence if we do not tackle that issue, if we do not start up a process of liberation of the workers, the word 'socialism' cannot be used. In this light I do view the victory of 1917 in Russia as a victory of capitalism because the process of overcoming workers' alienation never got started there. The big party bureaucracy played the role of capitalists and it was not the beginning of a socialist experience.

I am convinced that we are in a situation now where together with this problem of liberation at work two other major issues have opened up. One is the environmental issue: the relationship between work or labour and nature. The other is the movement around gender difference and sexual preference. I think on these two major issues the communist movement in general lags way behind. We only make a step forward when we find the linkages on these issues. In this respect I tend to say that communism or socialism are too labour-oriented or focused. They concentrate and focus only on that aspect of life which is work, which is crucial, of course. But I am convinced that if we wish to move further forward than in the past, we should build and focus more on both work and non-work. In other words, there are a lot of aspects about life that are also very important and we must be able to reconcile the struggle to liberate work with these other aspects. Hence, our struggle should not be just for higher wages, but should develop the power of workers at the workplace whilst at the same time

demanding to save the environment. At the same time, we have to change the pattern of development and struggle to recognize the importance of gender differences.

In terms of the battles around this particular perspective what happened after 1966? Were there any possibilities that these perspectives would become hegemonic in the party?

There was a possibility, because in Italy we had a big mass movement. Right after 1966 was 1968, which was felt not only in the rest of the world but in Italy as well. There was a big and strong student movement, which formed an alliance with the labour movement. Major battles were fought by the labour movement, with major confrontations taking place against capital. We called it a hot autumn because of the timing of these struggles. Finally, there was the student movement and workers' struggles in the autumn of 1969 and a big internationalist battle at about the same time focused on the big issue of Vietnam.

I must say that the Communist Party was very active in all three aspects of the struggle. This did lead to the Communist Party advancing a lot in 1964, 1968, 1975 and 1976. The Communist Party got very good results at the elections; it was a political force that reflected the scope of the mass movements we had between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s. We could call it the Red decade and in fact there were political consequences for parties. The Italian Communist Party reached over 34% of the votes. So one-third of voters voted for the Italian Communist Party. No communist party in the West has ever reached or even come close to such percentages. Moreover, at the same time, you had a major development in the labour movement. For example, the trade union movement achieved what we call the Workers' Bill of Rights, which is an Act on workers' rights.

So this was a peak in the history of the Communist Party. In the 1920s the party represented a small minority, and in the mid 1970s it was a big political party in Italy and in Europe. It reached a voting level in terms of percentages that no communist party in Europe has ever achieved in free elections. The enemy understood this. In the Christian Democratic Party there was an intelligent leader, Mr Moro, who understood that there were two winners in the election of 1976. Hence he understood that they should negotiate with the Communist Party. At the time, in 1976, the Communist Party was sort of on the verge of Government, on the threshold, about to go in; it was the highest peak in its history.

A small personal experience here: In 1976 I was elected Speaker of the House at the Chamber of Deputies, which was a major symbolic breakthrough.

However, an inability to move forward comes to mind as there was a huge resistance from the conservative groups in Italy. At the same time, a dramatic situation developed in the country and two waves of violence exploded. One came from secret pro-American groups leading to acts of terrorism, which began with the bombing in Milan and other events with the Secret Services. At the same time, a group called the Red Brigades was formed from a minority of the left, which began to practice violent attacks. These attacks, such as shooting and killing enemies, were never practiced by the Communist Party. The Red Brigade began using kidnappings and killings; a catastrophic crisis developed in the country. We were unable to overcome this crisis and in the early 1980s we were no longer in the parliamentary majority and the counter-offensive of big capitalist corporations developed.

So we were on the threshold of political power, almost on the doorstep and about to go in, but were, on the contrary, defeated. Looking back now, there are many explanations for this. We made many mistakes, but there is one basic reason. Starting from the 1970s that huge capitalist mutation I mentioned earlier had started, which eventually led to globalisation. The form through which capitalism operates began to change in the workplace. We did not see and understand this in time. That was the source of our defeat, which then led to the end of the Communist Party, linked to other international developments, of course.

This should be very clear. It was the Italian Communist Party that came closest to power in the West.

It would seem the eclipsing of the kind of position that you held led to an incomplete process of de-Stalinisation. Moreover, would you say the evolving strategic framework introduced a fixation with state power? Would you say the 'historical compromise' of the Italian Communist Party in the 1970s was about getting into power at all costs which led to the demise of the party?

I would not say the leader of the party at that time wanted to get into government at all costs. Berlinguer did seriously consider the possibility of an agreement with the Christian Democrats, which could modernise capitalism and ensure greater political democracy. He thought a compromise could be struck on these

two goals between the Italian Communist community and the Italian Catholic community. In my opinion Berlinguer did not see and was not tackling the major changes that were occurring in capitalism and the need for the left to become equipped to tackle this major mutation.

In my opinion Berlinguer's mistake was not to have seen the change that was coming about. There was a very symbolic thing that happened in the 1980s in which he played a part. In the 1970s there were great advances of communists and trade unions, three years of violence and then in the 1980s a major battle was waged by the workers in Fiat, which is the largest factory in Italy. Fiat is a very symbolic place and a major battle was waged by the workers in Fiat for new rights and powers. It was almost a symbolic event, because the owner of Fiat, is like a great national hero and he was being challenged by the biggest industrial party in the country. This was happening at a site where the workers in 1919 had begun the major worker's struggles following the Soviet Revolution. It is a key location in Italian history.

The workers started their struggle there in 1918, and Fiat resisted against their struggle with the clear intention to deliver a big blow against the workers' union and the left. Berlinguer did something that was very beautiful and was a very serious commitment on his part. He went to the gates of Fiat to talk to the workers who were at the time occupying the factory. So with this move the Communist Party was clearly taking sides with the workers and with their advanced struggle, but the owner of Fiat was organising a counter-movement, a counter-reaction. A few days later there was a big march in Turin promoted by the employers, but attended by some members of the Fiat personnel. So through that the bosses were beginning their backlash, the workers' movement was defeated and that is when the decline started.

You had this curve which reached its peak and then the decline came in the end. Berlinguer died in 1984 while delivering a public speech. This moved the whole of Italy because Berlinguer was a person who fascinated the country. His funeral was huge and the coffin went across the whole country accompanied by the president of the Republic. In the elections of that year we moved even further in terms of votes, but that is where our defeat started as well. In my opinion it is because the employers had re-organised their forces and we were not ready for this change.

So you were defeated inside the party. What happened to the comrades who were working with you in 1966? Also what happened to the perspectives you held inside the party?

Well, the group of communists who led that battle was broken up. They were sent to various parts of the country by the party. I was kept at the margins of the leadership. The whole group was sort of marginalised, the so-called Ingrao supporters, in a very civilised way, but also very firmly. Second, some of the so-called Ingrao supporters formed a faction in the party and formulated a manifesto. It was complicated, because I did not agree with this choice as I imagined that this would soon take them out of the party. And, indeed, shortly after this they were expelled from the party. They formed a group called the Manifesto and began publishing a magazine and then a daily newspaper. Their newspaper still comes out; I write for that paper often. But the radical left broke up and this, to some extent, occurred amongst the left of the Socialist Party as well.

So the radical left was broken up in various forms, fragmented. In the Italian Communist Party there was a freedom of discussion, which was much higher than in other communist parties. In no way could it be compared to what was happening in the Soviet Communist Party. We were the most advanced party on that level. And yet there was the idea that decisions should be taken from the top and there was a fear of debate. In this way Stalinism influenced the Italian Communist Party as well. We knew our road was different from that of the USSR, but we lacked the courage to go all the way in being different.

How would you explain the emergence of the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and its current political approach and orientation?

This is a consequence of our defeat. Moreover, at the end of the 1980s it was clear that the USSR would not come together. Italian communists still trusted Gorbachev, but when things started collapsing the leadership, which was a new generation as well, became convinced that there was no future for communism and that the very word 'communism' had become a word to be avoided. This certainly created a dramatic development inside the Italian Communist Party. The secretary of the party, Occhetto, when he was in Bologna for a meeting he told journalists that a new party should be created and that there should no longer be a communist party. I was in Spain at the time. I had gone there to meet some comrades. I remember I was in Madrid on the day when Dolores Ibarruri died. I

received a phone call from Rome and was told about the announcement. I was asked not to comment on the statement and that the secretary wanted to speak to me personally as soon as I was back. I remember that day very clearly

So I went back to Rome and was met at the airport by two comrades who were close friends of mine. One is now mayor of Naples, and the other was Minister of labour. They had come to explain to me on behalf of the party secretary what was going on, but I had formed my own opinion about this already. So the next morning I met with the secretary and I told him I was against this decision, against the end of the Communist Party. I went to parliament immediately thereafter and made a statement saying this. A conflict began, which lasted a few years, where I and other comrades tried as hard as we could to maintain a party in which a communist group can live. This battle lasted for over two years. The PDS moved closer and closer towards the middle of the political spectrum. The left split away and formed a new party. I remained a member for another year or so and then I left the party as well.

The PDS, as I expected, has abandoned the heritage of the Communist Party and has become a moderate leftist party. They are very close to the centre. That is how the PDS got started and for two years there was big political battle inside.

Is there hope for socialism and what would be the challenges for Communists in the 21st century?

I think there is both hope and a need for socialism for the historically objective reason that there is a huge problem of alienation at work. This is the key issue. Work represents a part of human life. I remember a worker who used to tell me, 'Work is my dignity'. I think there are four problems that are on the agenda.

First is what we describe as alienation of employed labour. It concerns the economic structure, the power of capitalism over human work, labour, and the subordination of human labour. It is not only a matter of wages (bread-and-butter issues) that are very important, but also the matter of power over workers and their productive capacity (over their skills, knowledge and brains). Hence we need a change that liberates millions of workers who are being dominated by capital. I do not really know which ones are the new forms of this struggle. My effort is to understand which ones are the new forms and I would recommend to you to follow the new thinking and the reflections that are being developed in the West and in Europe around these new issues. Try to understand what a modern

factory is. This is the first issue that is on the agenda. Capitalism is not able to solve the issue of alienation.

There is a second issue that we have not talked about this evening, which concerns the condition of exploitation of a whole part of the world, what we once used to call the Third World. But I need not talk about this to you because you know much more than me about this and in fact at the end I would like to ask you a question. This is an issue that is on the agenda even though in new forms, and it represents a reason and a need to fight for socialism.

Then there is a third and a fourth issue, which I find more difficult to describe. One is clearer to me. The clearer issue to me is what I call the nuclear issue. This century that I have lived in (I was born at the beginning of this century and I am at the end of this century now) has experienced terrible wars and has seen the creation of 'The Weapon'. So the question of peace is on the agenda as it never was before. The issue of war should not be underestimated today, but I think it is a major issue that we have witnessed this century and this is on the agenda.

The fourth issue I find more difficult to explain even to the comrades closest to me and maybe I will find it difficult to explain it to you two as well. From what we have said you can see the importance I place not only on emancipation, but on liberation of labour and for another model of civilisation and development. I think that in this world in which we live, in a city like Rome but also all over the world, we need and have the right to find space for useless things, for things you do not do for gain, not to get your bread and butter, not to make a career, not to earn more money, but simply to think and contemplate.

This civilisation frightens me to some extent because it wipes away all those useless moments in life. It wipes away what I call the night sphere of life. When you go to bed at night you doze and then you fall asleep and that is a big element of freedom in my view. Capitalists want to wipe away that too and so they are expanding night shifts. They even want to steal that time in the darkness, that time when you are alone with yourself, with your imagination and fantasies.

You in your country have quite a lot of battles to fight. So you have a lot of hard work to do, maybe more than us, but watch out. Do not let them steal your night freedom, freedom to perceive the nightly elements. Maybe I have not explained this clearly but I hope I have conveyed some of it.

Aluta Continua !

History has no anchor
before and after the exclamation mark
the fury of struggle lives :

From the barrios of Brazil
to the slums of India

From the ghettos in the USA
to the working class suburbs of Germany

The battle cry can be heard
like the distant clap of thunder

Steadfast ground shakes
uncompromising earth moves

The Red Flag is unfurled
visible from horizon to horizon

Our day is coming.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Samir Amin

Director of Third World Forum (Senegal)

Can you tell us about the influences and experiences that shaped your involvement in socialist politics?

Well, I am Egyptian, born in 1921, and was involved in politics as an activist, very young. This was not exceptional for people of my generation as it was during World War II. At secondary school at least two thirds of young people were politicised. Only a minority of the children belonging to the comprador bourgeoisie were not politicised. Everybody else, including children from wealthy families and from the middle classes, was politicised. The division was very clear: half were bourgeois nationalists and anti-imperialist, but did not have any concept of social change, of social justice. They were strongly anti-imperialist against the British occupation of Egypt and for modernisation, not Westernisation, because there was no search for identity and people were comfortable. But they supported modernisation of production, of the state (i.e. rationalisation of the state) and, to a certain extent, democracy. But democracy was not the main issue for them.

The other half of the politicisation was from the left. This young left called themselves communist and therefore Marxist. Even if we were very young and did not know what Marxism or Communism meant, we still referred to ourselves as such. I can remember at the age of 14 or so calling myself a communist and a Marxist. Though we did not know exactly what it meant, we did know that it linked at least three things together. First, it held a very strong anti-imperialist position. The second was an enormous admiration for the Soviet Union. It was during the War. I remember Stalingrad was for many of us a turning point in history. And third, what Russia had done through the Revolution had radically changed social organisation and that was what everybody needed. Therefore we were linking the anti-imperialist nationalist dimension with radical social change. We were very aware and were fighting for this, including fights in the corridors of the classrooms on any issue. We discussed and took positions on every issue; every day there was some new issue or event on radio, like a change of government or a demonstration of workers, which led to discussion, debate and ultimately taking a position on the issue.

Of course, behind all of this were the elders who were better organised. Though I call the one group of elders the right, they were considered the left in Egyptian politics. The *Wafd* was the nationalist and anti-imperialist party, but with no social reform. It usually won the elections with about 80% guaranteed to vote for them; the other parties – the palace parties – therefore, had no weight or very little weight in the society. They had weight through their economic positions and relationship with imperialism, but they had no popular dimension. So the *Wafd* was organised and was aiming for elections after the War, for negotiations with the British (in order to put an end to the *de facto* protectorate status of Egypt), and evacuation etc. The *Wafd* even put on to the agenda, though very vague, questions on the international set up.

On the other hand, there were the communist organisations. I use the plural purposely because communism has a complicated history in Egypt. It started in the early 1920s, but the British and Egyptian ruling class regime severely fought it and systematically suppressed it. Thus many people were arrested, and condemned to 20 or 30 years' imprisonment. It was severe. Around 1927 the Communist Party had disappeared from the scene. It restarted in the late 1930s; first, because there was the crisis in the thirties, and second because the Sidiqi dictatorship (of course supported by the British), was anti-democratic and drafted a quasi-fascist constitution. The Communist Party struggled against these developments during the dictatorship. There were also early echoes of what was later referred to as fascism and Nazism, including echoes about the success of Stalin's five year plans. All of these developments had quite a resonance among the intellectuals, but not at the mass level.

During the war the British and the Allies were compelled to display a minimal democratic tolerance at least with respect to the anti-fascist and anti-Nazi forces. It was the war and we could not be considered their main enemies, especially since the fascists had infiltrated the right wing of the nationalist movement and had supporters. People did not understand that the Nazis and the fascists were no better than British imperialism and even perhaps worse, if one can say; and therefore the enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend. They did not understand this, and therefore were being infiltrated often with the support of the king, showing the ambivalence of the palace, which was both pro- and anti-British. This minimal tolerance provided conducive conditions for Egyptian intellectuals, my elders who are about ten years older than me. Many of them are still living and are friends. These elders started in the early 1940s to reorganise a communist school. Probably because they were basically intellectuals, but not

intellectuals of the bad type, they had very few connections with the popular movement. These leftist intellectuals did not have links to the popular base because *Wafd* had a popular capacity to mobilise, like the Congress Party in India, and therefore could prevent communists from connecting with the popular masses.

Around 1946-47 was the crux of the movement and I remember it still as a secondary school pupil. On the 21 February, which is a well-known day now as it is our international day, an enormous mass demonstration was held in Cairo, which expanded throughout Egypt. The demonstration called for the British evacuation from Egypt. This effort was seriously repressed when the demonstration crossed the river Nile using the turning bridge. The police turned the bridge to isolate the demonstrators in the middle of the river and shot them from the banks. There were a lot of deaths. That, of course, created continuous disturbances, movements, etc. But moreover it reinforced the newfound connection between the intellectuals, students and workers.

It was during this demonstration and for the first time the communist *intelligentsia* established a connection with the popular base. This connection was established in our secondary school and the universities. A very strong echo emerged among the students. Perhaps the communists were the major organisation amongst the students as there was almost nothing else organised among the students. The communists were also making contacts with trade unionists. During the war the British were also compelled to show a minimal tolerance towards the working class. They were employing the working class in the military industries and so on. Thus they were compelled to tolerate a minimum of organisational capacity among the working class. So, there was a connection established, which ultimately led to the creation of the Students-Workers Central Committee. The Students-Workers Central Committee was built during the demonstrations and included representatives of organised and semi-organised workers, unions, other types of associations, and students. In 1946 I was 15 years old, but was finishing my secondary school. We were also demonstrating in support of this initiative asking the British to leave, and we were demonstrating under the communist banner. So my activism started early.

Then I moved to the university in Paris in 1947, when I was still quite young. In Paris we had a large number of very strong student organisations of overseas students who were staying there. So there was an Egyptian organisation, amongst others from North Africa, such as Syria, Lebanon, etc. There was a very

strong Vietnamese organisation and the beginning of an organisation of students from black Africa, from west and central Africa. In all these organisations we had a co-ordination committee, which was called Anti-Colonialist Students. We were very active in all those organisations with the active nucleus made up of members of the various communist parties. They were the dominant force. The membership included almost everybody with the exclusion of children from very rich families. It was politicized by the active nucleus and accepted its direction. That does not mean tendencies, such as nationalist, rightist and so on did not exist. We were very, very active in that. We were active in the anti-colonialists struggles demanding independence for everybody in Africa. These were general struggles and specific ones because students were regularly subject to repression. This led to contacts being established with the major national liberation movements, which were acting at home and had links with students in France. Personally, I can say I have known almost all of the first generation of African leaders. Some of them turned out to be very bad, neo-colonial leaders, while others turned out to be not so bad - we would say nationalist-populists, with some even attempting to call themselves socialists in one sense or the other.

That was what was happening in France, but there were more or less similar things in Britain. There were also a large number of students from the British Empire that were studying in Britain and had more or less similar organisations and had links with their home countries and movements. We established contact with our counterparts studying in England. The first leader I met in London, as far as I remember in 1952 or 1953, was Babu who was one of the leaders of the Zanzibarian revolution. He was later imprisoned. He was one of the coordinators on the English side; I was one of the coordinators on the Paris side. As far as I can remember there were four or five coordinators from our side. One of our coordinators was Vietnamese who went back to Vietnam and fortunately was not killed and became the mayor of Hanoi after liberation. There was a Senegalese, who is still my good old friend in Dakar. He was one of the elders and played a decisive role in the organisation of the students of French West Africa. There was a Nigerian, who was a communist; he was killed during the war in Nigeria. On the British side in London there were similar things. I do not remember the names of the people, but I remember having met them. Babu was the only one I kept in contact with and he was an old friend. He died three years ago in London. He was one of the most active.

We had fundamental problems at that time, which we continue to have. The

fundamental problem is how to associate national, anti-imperialist liberation and social revolution (i.e. socialism). Where is the priority of this struggle? On class struggle or on anti-imperialist struggle? What exactly is the bourgeoisie? Anti-imperialist or not, can we distinguish a good from a bad bourgeoisie, such as an anti-imperialist, patriotic section of the bourgeoisie from the comprador, pro-imperialist bourgeoisie? These are fundamental questions that are not yet solved, and will continue to be with us as long as we have not bridged the final stage of socialism at the global level. In dealing with these fundamental problems we must remember, at that point in time, that communism was very strong and well organised. Though the Third International had been formally dissolved in 1943, it continued to function *de facto* partly through the Cominform, but basically through the leadership of the 'Big Brother,' that is the leadership in Moscow.

Our understanding of Marxism in general as well as of politics and strategy was very dogmatic and commanded by reading and understanding what the Soviet Union said. That was common to all of us. That is, I was certainly not an exception, and I was a conventional communist along with the others. We always thought our position would not be correct if it did not correspond to the reading and understanding of the Moscow line. The Moscow line happened to be unclear in most cases, in the sense that it was a mixture of dogmatism, pragmatic policies of the Soviet state, etc. The lack of clarity meant that it could be understood in different ways, which led to internal confusion and internal battles. Internal tensions resulted between us, the young communist organisers from Africa and the French Communist Party as representative of the official communists. We were often accused of being nationalists, of disregarding the so-called primary contradiction from the secondary, etc. These tensions, however, did not lead to any explosions because there was strong discipline and a common belief that Moscow was right.

That was the picture of those years. Then I graduated with a Ph.D. in economics in 1957 and immediately went back to Egypt. In the meantime, there had been changes in Egypt. The changes were very ambiguous. Before Nasser's 1952 coup, the two major forces that came to the fore were *Wafd* (bourgeoisie nationalism) and communism. Communism was very strong at that time in the sense that, in spite of its internal divisions, the values and prestige of communism was very strong among the masses. It was strong at least among the urban masses, including the organised working class, but also among the petty bourgeoisie and intellectuals; it resonated in a very wide way in the society. That was the picture

and the struggle between the two.

In 1951 there were elections, which brought in the *Wafd* government. At that time the *Wafd* government was compelled to denounce the liberal treaty with Britain and that was the beginning of the small, and inefficient guerilla movement against the British in the small west canal zone. This, of course, led the British in alliance with the Palace and other reactionary forces to effect a coup. The *Wafd* government was toppled and replaced with a reactionary government. This was a very, very unstable time; it was from February to July 1952, six months in which the country could not be governed. The West, which started to be lead by the US, with the British becoming more of an ally, began to believe and rightly, that there was a communist menace within Egypt. And the possibility of the communists, perhaps not taking over as that was not so easy, but having a decisive position within the popular classes was in their minds.

I think that created the conditions for Nasser and his group of officers, who were nationalists, to come to the fore. Nasser's rise was not seen by the west as a revolution against them. On the contrary, it was applauded by the Americans precisely because it was believed to be the solution to the Egyptian impasse, of having a bourgeois popular movement, the *Wafd*, which is bypassed by the masses and had no legitimacy, and a strong communist movement. Well, that was the solution. At that point in time I was a member of the Communist Party and we had a very anti-Nasser position. Nasser's coup was fabricated by the US to stop the popular movement led by the communists. The repression was terrible. Comrades were arrested and condemned even more severely than in the previous period of the British reactionary movement, to 20 years and so on. We were forced to operate clandestinely.

In 1955 there was Bandung, which is a date that marks a turning point in our common history. What was Bandung? It was the meeting of the major leaders of newly independent third-world countries (e.g. Nasser, Nehru, Sukharno and so on) and we, representatives of the national liberation movements in the independent and not-yet-independent areas, that is most of Africa. China was also there. They developed the concept, which has ruled the world for a number of decades, of not only non-alignment, which is the international political dimension that rejects inclusion in the Western crusade against communism, the Soviet Union, and China, but also developed the internal side of it, which is the project of development (i.e. the modernisation of the state and development). The project of development envisioned had a social content and it supported a

variety of things ranging from: agrarian reforms, when necessary, which was the case in Egypt; nationalisations, at least of major imperialist companies; a discourse on social justice, on socialism whether local Arab, African or Indian socialism. That was the Bandung period.

What happened in Bandung is that Nasser realised he had a margin of maneuver much wider than he thought. He realised he could rely on the Soviet Union for economic support, political intervention, and eventually military support. He, therefore, realised that the position of imperialism was not as strong as it appeared. Immediately following this the Soviets entered an agreement with Egypt to deliver armaments to Egypt, which the West (the Americans and the British) had continuously rejected. The armament agreement was then connected to the financing of the Aswan dam, which was supposed to be the major project of the World Bank. The World Bank withdrew from the project and submitted the political argument that support for Egypt's development project was incompatible with the delivery of armaments by the Soviets. The Soviets said fine, we will help you with it. This suddenly created a political shift that saw the Nasser regime go from being very unpopular to suddenly becoming very popular within three or four years, because it responded to a nationalist attitude. Additionally, many progressive individuals developed illusions that because it was allying with the Soviet Union, it would increasingly get a socialist or socially progressive content.

That led to a shift in the political position of the Egyptian Communist Party, which went from radical opposition of Nasserism to, I would say, an almost unconditional support for it. This was the case especially after July 1956 when the Suez Canal was nationalised and the October 1956 aggression of Britain, France, and Israel against Egypt. The US finally came to an understanding that Nasser was not going to be so bad and that indefinitely supporting British and French colonialism was not the best way to develop their own hegemony and support for the anti-communist crusade. I came back to Egypt exactly at the time when the Communist Party was shifting towards support for Nasser; I just finished my PhD. In the meantime, an elder, who was one of the secretaries of the Communist Party and who had been in prison was liberated. He was a first-class economist; he is still alive. He was nominated by Nasser as the head of a kind of public holding, which was to manage the nationalised British, French, and Belgium assets; that is, it was to manage most of the Egyptian political economy of course, industry, transport, banking, etc. I was recruited through my elder and comrade as one of the junior officers to work in that institution; I

started working there.

During the three years that followed from 1957 to 1960, I experienced perhaps my first move towards a more independent view, still as a Marxist, but a more independent view than the official view prevailing within the Egyptian Communist Party and, on a larger scale, say among communists in Africa and the Third World in general. I saw the contradictions of the national populist project. While I did not call it national populist at the time, it was clear to me and to others I am sure. There was anti-imperialism on one side, but also accommodation with it, on the other side, because there was a limited role given to the popular classes. The popular classes were not given a role in the political building. There was a populist attitude that dictated that we will do things for you, but will not allow the popular classes to organise themselves and do it. Rather we will do it for you. I had a location, which allowed me to see how it was working, because I was in a state organization and saw it in the halls and in the meetings of the new state companies. I saw how those people, who were so-called representatives of the people, were having bourgeois visions of everything. They were not necessarily corrupted, but they were morally corrupted and were managing things with small politics and clientelism and maneuvering the representatives of the workers, in many cases, through corruption. So I saw it and my responsibility was to write a report for the government for each of those meetings. All my reports of those meetings are bad. The people were doing the exact opposite of what the state said, which created very strong and growing tension.

At that time the Sino-Soviet debate began in 1957: it related to the 'giant leap forward', criticism of Khrushchev by the Chinese, the Chinese view on the Soviet capitalist road and different visions of the main international question: how to advance socialism. There were two views on the international question. The Soviet view was very clearly expressed through the notion: pacifist co-existence. The danger of nuclear war was the major danger to human kind, and therefore pacifist coexistence was desirable. Simultaneously, pacifist coexistence would also lead to the success of socialism, because socialism will achieve more than capitalism and the people will see this and move gradually towards socialism. During this time I think Khrushchev made the point to Kennedy that: 'we will grow faster than you and we will bury you'. That was the Soviet line, which necessarily led to an opportunistic adjustment and a prescription to the national liberation movements to keep quiet.

The Chinese line was expressed very clearly because it was expressed a little later in 1962 in the famous letter of 25 points to the Soviet Communist Party. The Chinese line argued that the main struggle for socialism was through anti-imperialist liberation provided that the leading anti-imperialist forces were the popular classes, the workers and peasant alliance directed by the Communist Party. This is what would bury capitalism, not the success of the Soviet economy. Therefore we should support the most radical in the anti-imperialist struggle and we should not accept the blackmailing of nuclear war, etc. They argued that the people were stronger than imperialism; they may fight and if they fight they will win. These were the two lines. It was very, very clear which to choose between the two. I was one of a number in the Egyptian Communist Party at that time who chose the Chinese line. The majority joined the Soviet line. That of course generated an increased tension between us and the regime. The regime could accept to a certain extent the majority line of the Communist Party because it was a kind of left tail of national populism, and not much more than that. With the Chinese line, however, there was no compromise possible, and therefore we started to come to the end.

This picture was not exclusively Egyptian, but also Asian and African, but particularly African, in 1957-1958. In 1957, two years after Bandung, a major meeting was held in Cairo of the national liberation movements; nobody was independent yet in Africa. It was the time when Nkrumah appeared in the forefront, there was the Algerian war and FLN was present and strong, there had been the Mau-Mau revolt in Kenya and even if it had been crushed it created a new political dimension in East Africa. There had also been rebellions in Cameroon and Madagascar. And there were other places with anti-imperialist struggles and national liberation movements, of course with all its shades, present at the conference. I must confess I do not remember seeing ANC or South African Communist Party people at this meeting. I do not want to say they were not there, but I do not know; this can be checked by historians. It is true that it was very hard times for them in South Africa; it was three years before Sharpeville (1960); it was tough times. There were also representatives of national populist governments, like Sukharno, Nehru, Nasser, and many others. All those people were present and it was very clear that those in power (i.e. the governments) had a natural sympathy with the Soviet position, because they did not want to call on their own people to struggle which would be too dangerous for them. They wanted to have a stronger position in negotiation with imperialism, with the national and international institutions. They were very vocal in the UN and the Soviet Union supported this, including military support

to protect them from aggression and so on. This was very important. They also knew it included the potential for Soviet aid for at least establishing basic industries and so on.

While the movements who had not yet reached independence had a tendency to be more radical, because the Soviet line had nothing to offer them as negotiation was not an option since the other side was not negotiating. With whom were they supposed to negotiate? They had to continue fighting and, therefore, the Chinese line supported them as it argued that out of these struggles things would actually be changed, and nothing else was really appealing to them. And there were strong left tendencies, Maoist tendencies, appealing to them, within the movements from Algeria, West Africa, East Africa, and many places.

Because I was linked with all that this led me into big trouble in Egypt. So I was forced into clandestinity; I knew I was going to be arrested and escaped. And so in 1960 I found myself outside the country. Where to go? I did not want to be in exile in Western Europe. Since I had been an activist with the national liberation movements of other countries in Africa as a student, why not go somewhere in Africa? It happened immediately after that on 20 September 1960 and, I am saying in a joking way, that Marxist-Leninism was proclaimed state religion in Mali. It was a radicalisation to a certain extent; it was not only verbal radicalisation, but it also had its global dimension. The party that led the independence movement had won the elections, but came into serious conflicts with the neo-colonial, right wing and therefore shifted to the left and proclaimed to be building socialism and declared they were Marxist-Leninist.

I knew these people because some had been students with me. So I decided to go there. I saw the same affair as in Egypt repeating itself in different conditions. I was a so-called advisor of the Ministry of Planning. The Malian comrades considered me almost national, as a comrade, but I knew that I would not ultimately be considered really a national and I understood it. I had very good relations at the party level and with individuals, with my colleagues and with the left. Soon the same thing I saw in Egypt repeated itself; that is, the experiences that I now call national populist repeated itself like in Egypt. Among other things I was asked by the leaders of government to participate in negotiations with Guinea, Mali and Ghana. The negotiations were on many things, some very concrete like on economic arrangements and some were more rhetorical and general like on Pan Africanism. This led me to Ghana to meet Kwame Nkrumah, to Guinea to meet Sékou Touré, and to meet many other people to discuss a range

of matters. This is when I saw that it was a general picture of national populists. Without sweeping generalisations because each case operated with different conditions, but it was more or less the same.

It was the 1960s, and except for the colonies in Southern Africa the rest of the African countries were formally independent. All of them had nationalist populist regimes. In the rightist national populist position it was generally believed that history was finished, we had one imperialism, but it did not exist anymore. Imperialism was strictly external, direct domination. We got rid of that so there was no imperialism any more. This was the rightist position, which we can call neo-colonialist. And the left position is still there. That led to a strong instability in Africa. In particular there was the Congo affair in 1960 and a series of changes and radicalisation in Benin, Madagascar, Tanzania and other countries. In the Congo affair, because the Belgians believed up until the last minute that they could avoid giving independence to the country, the movement radicalised. When the Belgians were compelled to give independence Lumumba was the leader and they were afraid of him. I think perhaps they were overstating the radicalisation, but the fact is they were afraid of him. Then the West supported efforts to split the country. And then they brought Mobutu first behind the scene and then in the forefront in Kinshasa. That led to a new wave of reaction and finally a victory for the reaction in the case of Congo, which later became Zaire.

A second wave of nationalist populist movements emerged out of the various struggles in the 1970s. This second generation hoped they would be better than the first one. The left wing had moved again and had been victorious, and there was hope that this second generation would be more radical. In the case of Tanzania it was, as you know, a gradual shift; there was a first stage in which the regime of Nyerere did not know very clearly where to go. In 1967 there was the Arusha Declaration; the nationalist populists were very strongly attracted to the idea that there is no way but socialism. This was immediately after the 1964 Zanzibar revolution, which was led by Babu (it was here that I met him again) and there was a hope of radicalisation. So we had a second wave of movements; history has proven that this second wave did not lead to much more than the first.

There were other experiences in Africa which developed in the same frame, some major ones such as in the Ethiopia after the fall of the Emperor and the radicalisation within the country. Without sweeping judgments, I still believe more and more that all these belong to the same family of national populists.

That is, the main question remains the same. And possibly when we come to South Africa, we are going to say that it is the same question in different conditions. That is, the question of how to relate the anti-imperialist dimension with the internal social revolution. And this question will lead later, when we discuss theoretical matters, to the question of transition to socialism, to the concept of global capitalism, and all those theoretical concepts.

The political lesson, which I conclude from this, is that in Africa there has been a long series of attempts that never moved beyond national populism, and which, therefore, reached their historical limits very quickly and were bound to gradually erode and degenerate. This led to the current disarray, depoliticisation, and sad picture we currently have of our continent. We should, therefore, try to understand why it was so. Is it possible, and under what conditions, can we ensure national populism does not repeat itself? How should this be connected with our analysis of the global capitalist system, of what is socialism, of the transition from capitalism to socialism, etc.? These are fundamental Marxist questions. But, I repeat, the main question remains, and will remain in my opinion until we reach a stage that is still very far. How to connect those conflictual and contradictory, but simultaneously complementary dimensions of the struggle - the anti-imperialist and simultaneously social change. Whether we call it revolution or progressive evolution, the point is positive progressive change.

You have a distinctive approach to historical materialism or Marxism. Can you describe the main aspects of your approach to historical materialism and how this relates to understanding contemporary capitalism?

Yes, this is a very fundamental question. I will express my views as they are today, not as they developed gradually because that would be a long history. I have come to focus on the need to distinguish capitalism as a mode of production from capitalism as a really existing world system. Of course, the two are interconnected but they are not synonymous.

Capitalism as a mode of production has been beautifully analysed and uncovered by Marx in *Das Capital*. That is, it is a system based on a set of social relations, basically and fundamentally exploitation of labour by capital. Capital is defined as social relations of production and not as synonymous to equipment. We can look at the matter of how it appears as an integrated market, that is as a market society in which more and more of the social production is commodified,

where there is fundamental economic alienation, where labour is turned into a commodity, and where capital, as social relations, also appear as commodities (e.g. property rights, which can be bought and sold). This has been historically constructed within the bourgeois nation state and has moved quickly towards its perfection; that is, as an integrated market in its three dimensions: market for product, market for capital, and market for labour, which have been within the boundaries of the national bourgeois state and part of the historical development of the bourgeoisie. This is capitalism as a mode of production, which is qualitatively different from the previous modes of production and patterns of social organisation. Whether we call them feudal or tributaries, the capitalist mode of production is qualitatively different from the previous modes of production. If we look at this system expanded at a global level, its expansion was not one in which it would be repeated in different countries with a lag in time, with their specificities and commonalities. It did not expand in that way.

It expands through conquering other societies and submitting them to the logic of domination of capital and the capitalist centers. This is a very fundamental point, which should not confuse capitalism as a mode of production with capitalism as a global system. If we look at the global system we find that it is moving more and more towards an integrated market for commodities at a global level. We find that it is increasingly, though gradually, an integrated market for capital, that is for access to property and the many things connected to it, like technologies. We do not find any tendency to establish any global labour market; labour remains segmented among other things nationally and in some cases within the nation along race and other lines, but basically at a global level along boundaries of states. The fact that there are states has not created the conditions for a global market for labour. I submit that this simple difference between capitalism as a global market and capitalism as an integrated market of the mode production creates polarisation by itself. Polarisation is, therefore, imminent to the global expansion of capitalism. It is not the by-product of historical differences and of millions of specific conditions. There are always specific conditions in everything and everywhere, but it is not the specificities that explain what is called, in the vulgar language, 'developed,' 'underdeveloped', and 'developing' and so on. This is polarisation.

It is the first system in the history of humankind that is polarising. If we look at the differences in the average levels of productivity in the world before the industrial revolutions, say about 1800, we find that the spectrum of distribution of average family productivity per annum was not enormous. Some people say it

was 1 to 1.3, which is very small, while others say 1 to 2 and the most extreme, say 1 to 3. For most of the population on the planet, about 80% to 90%, the difference in inequalities was not enormous. If we look at the GDP's per capita in 1950, 150 years later, it is 1 to 30. This is a degree of polarisation that had never been seen in human history, in the 5000, 10 000, 300 000 years before. Between 1950 and today (the eve of the next millennium) it has moved from 1 to 30 up to 1 to 60. And we know through the records of the UNDP and Human Development Reports that the disparity is continuously growing year after year. This polarisation, therefore, is a crucial phenomenon, a new historical dimension, which has not always been so. Polarisation is really a phenomenon associated with capitalism. Nothing similar to this had occurred before. Perhaps it is the most dramatic dimension of really existing capitalism, because what has been the outcome of this is that within two centuries, not an enormous amount of time in the history of humankind, 75% of humankind is excluded from the benefits of this expansion of capitalism. It is enormous, and there is no equivalent development in the previous systems. Therefore I ask what are the fundamental characteristics and contradictions of capitalism, as a mode of production and as a global system. I am saying there are three characteristics. First, and this is fundamental; it is a system based on alienation. Labour is commodified and therefore a system based on commodity alienation, economic alienation, labour alienation and so on. This is fundamental and in this sense I am a Marxist and nothing more than a Marxist. I think this is the strong core of what is Marxism.

Second, the polarisation generated by globalization, as a result of the expansion of capitalism. The expansion of capitalism is not synonymous with reproducing the capitalist mode of production but rather has engendered polarization. Moreover, the existence of global markets does not mean the capitalist mode of production has expanded on a global scale. These dimensions have been, to varying degrees, overlooked by historical Marxism. That is Marxism as it has been understood by those social forces which claim to be Marxist. Perhaps in Marx himself there was even a nucleus of not understanding globalisation. Why? Marx was very optimistic. I recently reread his work, because it was the 150th anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto*, which is a brilliant pamphlet, but very optimistic. It says that in a few decades capitalism would have conquered the world and destroyed everything-religions, nations, tribes, everything-and created only proletariats and bourgeois. And on the same footing it says that all the working people in the world will have been changed into proletariats and therefore there is a need and possibility for a world revolution

establishing communism for all. It was a tremendously optimistic view based on an over-estimation of the revolutionary character of the bourgeoisie, that they would open the market in all its dimensions. They would abolish all boundaries, not only free trade, but the free migration of peoples, of everything. This would destroy states and nations as historical constructions, religions, etc. In front of the bourgeois and proletariat polarisation, there would be no race, nations, religions, nor any other boundaries.

We should address neo-liberals and tell them they are liars, because if they were truly neo-liberal then they would remove all boundaries. We would say 'yes, let us surpass the states, let us surpass the boundaries, let us have the people moving as individual wherever they want and the logic of capital will develop the whole thing'. Then the neo-liberals would be serious and we would implement what they say. But they are liars, they say that but do not do it. They want to open to capital and trade, but not to labour and therefore there is polarisation. I think that this is the main ingredient. It does not mean that there were not many other things counterbalancing this in Marx; Marx, though not a God, was more than a brilliant man who saw a great deal in advance, but perhaps his whole picture was not unrealistic, but was unrealistic in that it would be achieved within a few decades.

The other point is that while there certainly is colonial expansion, it did not start in the late 19th century. After all, what were the Americas from the very beginning if not colonies and India was colonised in the 18th century just before the Industrial Revolution. There was a second or third wave of colonialism, particularly in the scramble of Africa, towards the end of the 19th century and this coincided with monopoly capitalism, with a degree of centralisation of property, capital moved from many local enterprises to conglomerates to major oligopolies and monopolies. That was seen not only by Lenin. It was also clearly seen, as Lenin notes, by Hobson and Hilferding as something new. Therefore there was a corrective that was introduced to the view that capitalist expansion at a global level is the whole expansion of the capitalist mode of production, which was Lenin's theory of imperialism. And some ingredients of consciousness were derived from this. Out of this Lenin concluded that revolution would start in the weakest link that is in the peripheries, which are the countries that are victims of the capitalist global expansion, which was the case of Russia at that time.

Again Lenin did not go far enough in the sense that he said the revolution would

start in the periphery, but would quickly move to the rest of the centre, which did not happen. The revolution moved to more peripheries, which took the form either of anti-imperialist and socialist revolution, like China, Vietnam, Korea and Cuba or of the national liberation movements, which is, let us call it a watered-down format, still anti-imperialist but with less of a social change dimension. And that continued to be the driving force in the change of the global system. Therefore all the understanding of historical materialism as applied to modern times and for the future, must take into account that polarisation in capitalist development will not disappear; capitalism must be, and will continue to be polarising. Therefore the rejection of capitalism will continue to come in different forms and to different degrees, but always from the protests of the victims, particularly the working people and popular classes of the peripheries. This is the second characteristic.

The third characteristic is related to the natural resource dimension. Now, capital accumulation is a rational system, but every system in history has its rationality. But we should understand that capital accumulation is rationality based on short-term calculation. Financial calculation is short-term, decisions for even the longest capital investments in basic minerals, oil and so on, is a basic calculation over 20-30 years; that is the maximum horizon. For financial speculation it might be a quarter of a second. For most so-called rational economic decisions it is a few years away. Financial speculation is a very short-term rationality and therefore it comes into conflict with longer-run rationalities such as, beyond-generation rationalities (e.g., 'What world are we preparing for our children?') and that is true at a global level for societies as well as for family levels, where people have in mind the rationality of 'What future for *our* children?'. So there is a conflict here. We ought to know all the rhetoric of the neo-liberal rationality of calculation, but also what the limits of that rationality are. It is a short-term rationality, nothing more. The result is that part of the value created is based on the destruction of the natural basis. Again this is not new. We have seen how the expansion of farmers in the US, to the west, have destroyed millions of hectares because of this short-run calculation based on patterns of agriculture. We saw it in Northern India with the British colonisation when the rationality of capitalism was introduced, that instead of maintaining the logic of the previous systems of keeping the value and the quality of the land for generations, it led to destruction. This has been repeated continuously.

Marx also saw this; it is not true that this was a discovery of the Greens. Marx writes in *Das Kapital*: 'Value, accumulation of capital, is based on the

destruction of two sources of wealth: human beings and nature.' It is beautiful. I think this has been forgotten in historical materialism, that it was played down, and instead the idea that nature has no limits and so on was assumed. This was not just Stalin's views; you find it in the workers' movements in the West and in the ideology of the Second International before the Russian revolution. It continued in the Third International and the Soviet system; the natural resource dimension was overlooked. It is a good thing that it has been rediscovered by the so-called Greens and environmentalists, except they do not relate the destruction to the logic of capitalism, while Marx related it to the logic of capitalism. This is why they do not provide an answer to the question: what do we do? They do not see the link with the short-run rationality of capitalism.

We can reach a number of important conclusions from this. First, is the fact of polarization. We can call it centre and periphery in the world system. Polarisation is specific to capitalism and it is so connected to capitalism that will inevitably continue as long as capitalism is the leading force. Therefore, these dimensions of the challenge were overlooked by historical Marxism. My reading of historical materialism with respect to the past is that these three characteristics were new and specific to capitalism. We do not find them before capitalism and therefore we should reread history not by extrapolating modern phenomena on the past and say: 'Well, inequality has always been the wound in history' or 'unequal development has been constant in history'. It worked differently in the past and therefore had a different meaning. It was my effort, particularly in *Class and Nation*, to look into unequal development before capitalism. This is also what led me to ask an important question about the origins of capitalism in Europe: why Europe?

After all, if we look at ancient systems from 500BC to 1500AD, we find three major groups of societies, which I would call the centers of human society of that long period. The word 'centre' here should not be synonymous with 'centre' in capitalism. The three groups are China, India and Middle East and their combined population represented 80% of humankind at that time. The first difference is that the centers in ancient times were not a minority, like the centers of our current time, but were the vast majority. There were also peripheries; Europe, Africa (with the exception of Egypt), South East Asia and Japan were geographically the peripheries of these three centers. Obviously they were more backward in the sense that they did not have mature state organisation, did not have use of the plough, and did not have a written language, while the three centers had all three components: a state, writing, and the plough. These

peripheries also should not be confused with the concept of periphery under capitalism. First, they were a minority and second, they were not subjugated by the centers, but rather were disregarded. The curious thing is the following: if we look until the 11th century and compare the European and African peripheries, most of the European periphery, except small parts belonging to the Byzantine empire (i.e. the Middle East centre), were at the same level of development. The level of development between, for example, the organisation of German tribes and so-called kingdoms in the 7th or 8th centuries was similar to Ghana or elsewhere in Africa. Curiously we do find that in a very short period between 1000 and 1250 there is a jump in European development. The jump is related to the semi-states, feudal states, which introduced the plough and writing through the church. We do not find a similar thing happening in Africa at the same time. This marks the beginning of the difference, which is not so old. Second, and again curiously, within a very short period, from 1215 to 1500, Europe really catches up with the three centers, in technology, etc. Europe then starts conquering the world with the capitalist system. That is, it began destroying the ancient systems not only inside by moving towards the industrial revolution and bourgeois revolution, but also from outside by submitting the ancient centers and peripheries to this internal change. These facts should be recognised and it was in looking into explanations of this that led me to a criticism of Eurocentrism. There are three patterns of explanation which I reject.

First, the most vulgar and simply racist but still in the minds of many people, is that the Europeans are superior human beings. It is no longer fashionable to say it frankly, but in the 19th century it was written as a scientific certitude by respectable people. I am sure quite a number of people who still believe this exist in South Africa even if they are no longer in power. It is not tolerated to write it, but many still think it. This is the most vulgar way to put it. There are also sophisticated ways to say it, such as there was an ingredient specific to Europe. This is a second explanation used to explain Europe's development. Thus, a sophisticated way to explain it is by invoking Greek ancestry, which achieved things nobody else in China, India, and the Middle East had done. It is a myth of Greek ancestry, because the Greeks belonged, in my reading of historical materialism, to the Middle East, which had many different civilisations from Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, Greece, etc. They exchanged a lot and gradually merged into one.

The merging point was the Hellenistic period not because it was the first conquest as there had been military conquerors before, but they had no impact.

With the Hellenistic conquest an ideology common to the region crystallised, the Hellenistic ideology. This laid the basis for later Christianity and Islam to develop in the region. It is not pure chance that Christianity and Islam appeared in the same region; rather the ground was prepared for their emergence. These developments have nothing to do with the history Europe, but are part of the history of the Middle East, not Europe. Therefore it is interesting to see that nobody in Europe knew or thought of Greek ancestry before the 19th century. It was a recent fabrication, a rereading of history, which the Europeans had never had before. It is, therefore, a mythology, but a very powerful one that is constantly repeated. It is another Eurocentric way of explaining the miracle of Europe. Since of course the Chinese, Africans, and Indians have no Greek ancestry they were, from the beginning, unable to invent capitalism. That is the logic of the second explanation.

The third way of explaining the miracle of Europe is what I call *Christianofailure*. The argument is that Christianity as a religion has specifics which led to the invention of capitalism. Since the other people are not Christian, they could not, therefore, invent capitalism. This is also very powerful. When you look at the ideology of this civilising mission of the Europeans it is strongly linked with the expansion of Christianity, which is brought as a gift to people. It is another type of mythology. Why mythology? In my studies of religions, and again in my understanding of historical materialism, all religions are always very flexible. In the sense that religion does not explain changes in society, rather changes in society lead to re-understanding the religion. Let me give some examples. First, is an anti-Weber position. Weber explained capitalism by Protestantism. I explain Protestantism by capitalism, which I think was also the view of Marx. Wallerstein put it strongly saying capitalism started in Italy and cities which were Catholic and not Protestant.

So what is the link? It is the opposite, the anti-Weber position, which shows that Christianity indeed proved to be flexible. Christianity was an ideology which was understood in accordance with the needs of a feudal society. It survived and changed in accordance with changes in society and became an ideology that is a supportive element of capitalism. When we look at Confucian philosophy, which is not a religion but something that plays the role of a religion, Europeans wrote 100 years ago that the backwardness of China is due to Confucian philosophy. Now it is fashionable to say the Asian miracle is due to Confucianism. This simply means that Confucianism means everything and nothing; it is flexible. This is the general rule of religion. I see the same with

Islam, which was born in conditions of tribal societies in the desert and adjusted perfectly to the ruling of an empire. Because the Muslim societies have not yet moved to capitalism, except in the form of subjugated periphery capitalism, Islam has not moved there either and has become a straitjacket. All of this shows that religion can be flexible. Therefore I reject the three Eurocentric explanations. European development happened neither because of a specific Greek ancestry which the others did not have, nor because of the specific religion which the others did not have. Nor does the race explanation provide the answers.

So having rejected all this, what remains? How should we explain the origins of capitalism in Europe? My explanation is the following. We have the same contradiction that operated in all pre-capitalist advanced societies. In China, India and the Middle East, there was the same contradiction, which was a contradiction between the level of development of productive forces which could not be bypassed unless new relations of production were established. That is, unless capitalism was invented. That struggle is a determinant in the understanding of political and ideological struggles in those societies. Those societies were strongly organised and with local specificities, but there are commonalities. I refer to these commonalities as tributary, which means the surplus is extracted from the producer as a tribute legitimised by political, cultural and religious power. In the case of India, it was associated with caste; in the case of China with the Confucian understanding of the ideology of state organisation; and in the Middle East it was understood in an Eastern Christian way and then an Islamic way. Therefore we have, what I call a fully-fledged tributary system, which is strong.

When we look at the peripheries in the pre-capitalist world we find a nascent tributary system, which was still weak and in its early stages. This allows the periphery to appear more flexible because the same contradictions, even if less advanced, had the capacity to move faster because they were less resisted by the power systems. In the case of Europe the tributary system took the form of feudalism, which was an over-decentralised pattern of power with practically no state, no monarchy, only feudal lords who were almost independent of one another. Theoretically they were organised in some hierarchy, but the hierarchy had no power over them. This was the chance/opportunity of Europe in the sense that what was bound to appear elsewhere just appeared in Europe before anywhere else, but once it appeared there it stopped appearing elsewhere. Therefore the unequal development in the formation of the capitalist system is

not the result of specificities, but is the result of commonalties, and therefore it could have appeared elsewhere. Having appeared in Europe then came a period of the destruction of the other systems, and the beginning of the capitalist centre-periphery system, which is different from the previous systems. That is my understanding of historical materialism.

When you talked about Marxist theory you mentioned the Maoist impulse and influence in your own thinking. What is your view on Maoism?

First, I want to distinguish between what I see as the positive in Maoism and its historical limitations, which led to the death of Maoism. Its positive aspect is at different levels. First, there was awareness that what was being built in the Soviet Union and in China was not socialism, but the continuation of a class society that Maoism called capitalism, disregarding the specificities of that capitalism. This was related to the weakness of the party and to the formation of a new bourgeoisie through the control of the state and the party, which I think is empirically correct. But it does not analyse why the party evolved in that way. This was very attractive to me and others, I think, because it was true. Many people felt Soviet society was being presented as having achieved the meaning of socialism and yet you find that it was curiously based on inequality, and an inequality related to the power system. And a number of its features are very close to those that you see under capitalism, including alienation, bourgeois attitudes of the middle class, their patterns of consumption, their greed (they want to be as rich as possible and as close as possible to type of wealth of the western bourgeoisie).

Mao moved one step further when he said, 'fire in the headquarters' which means do not look at the bourgeoisie where it does not exist in private property, they have no private property. They are the leaders of the Communist Party (i.e. the headquarters), this is the bourgeoisie of tomorrow. What happened in the Soviet Union 30 years later proved Mao was right. The new bourgeoisie is coming out of the bureaucratic party elites; that was the direction of that party. But who will fire on the headquarters? Who will be the social agent for that? Perhaps one of the weaknesses of Maoism was to think that the youth is going to be the agent. The youth is a very undefined category, less related to class. They initiated the Cultural Revolution, which I do not see as totally ugly and negative, but as a big chaos. This is a general rule among the youth; there is more generosity, more will to be serious and honest with targets and so on than among the elders, but that is not enough. The result was that it was chaotic, and this youth could be

manipulated, leading nowhere, which put an end to the Cultural Revolution. So we can see that there was an awareness of the problem, but an incapacity to respond solely to the problem, I think, and this will lead me to the question of the long transition. The correct response would have been to let the popular classes, the working class, peasants, etc., organise more freely than they are through the control of the state-party. Then there is no reason why they should not be stronger agents for socialist change than the elite thinking for them. But this was not the case.

The second dimension of Maoism was at the global level; this dimension was also correct but with the same limitations in that it saw what the real challenge was, but did not give an answer on how to use it. Since there is this growing global polarisation associated with the extension of capitalism, capitalism will be destroyed by the struggle of those victims, the peoples of the periphery. Therefore they should be supported in their more radical forms to continue their struggle. This was, as I said before, the opposite of the Soviet line and was, and continues to be, correct. But again, it is not an answer. It comes back to the same question of the imbalance between the anti-imperialist dimension and the social change dimension. It did not provide an answer as to how to deal with this imbalance.

Now if we move from these historical judgments of Maoism to understanding its limits, my answer to this question relates to the concept of the global long transition from capitalism to socialism. We have to move to the question of concepts of the transition, to the original concepts of early Marxism, for example the Communist Manifesto, that capitalism created the conditions at a global level for a global socialist revolution. This could not be sustained theoretically for long. It was gradually replaced during the Second International, before the Russian Revolution, in the workers' socialist movements of Europe at the end of the 19th century by the social democratic concept of evolution or revolution (evolution Bernstein, revolution Kautsky). The centers then bring socialism as a gift to the backward people. This was Eurocentric, arrogance, nationalism, and very little respect for others, whether Bernstein's evolution or Kautsky's revolution. Then comes the Russian Revolution, and afterward Lenin had more or less the same starting point of Kautsky's revolution, the traditional Marxist revolutionary wing of the Second International, but moved beyond this in two directions.

First, he expected the revolution to start in the weakest link, but would be

quickly followed by revolutions in the centers. This did not happen. Second, he expected it to expand more in the East. This happened. But it does not explain how nor does it indicate how it leads to global socialism, because the centers are there. Thus, the Soviet societies are confronted with a challenge as nothing happens until the Chinese Revolution, which did not succeed until 1949, which is after World War II. Therefore, the Soviets were all alone. So, what to do? Trotsky argued that they should do nothing, and call for revolution in the centers, which he was certain would happen. But it did not happen. The practical Stalinist answer, brutal and primitive in some aspects, was to build socialism in Russia. What was built could have been a little different, there is flexibility in history, and their pattern taken was not the only historical possibility. The debates initiated by Bukharin and others confirms there were different views.

None of them theorised a long transition, which could be called a national popular, not populist stage, that is a mixture of capitalism and socialism, with ingredients of both conflicting within the transitional society for a long time and not defining them by sectors (i.e. when it's private property it is capitalism and when you have public property it is socialism). Public property organized through labour, hierarchy, etc. is very similar to what happens in the private realm (e.g. the Russian or Chinese industrial factory was similar to the private organisation). For the worker it is more or less the same experience (e.g. the same type of hierarchy, etc.). Instead, at the level of macro-policy, there are guarantees of a number of values (i.e. employment, mobility, education, solidarity, maximum equality, etc.), which are not the values of capitalism. These ingredients can exist simultaneously and can inform the socialist logic, using a regulated market, etc. But it did not reach this phase. On the contrary, instead of this pattern of a long phase of national popular transition, what gradually crystallised was the building of socialism, which was increasingly reduced to state property, state command, and collectivisation for the rural arenas. This was reduced to the suppression of private property and maximisation of public property, but it was very strongly integrated into state control through the planning system. This became the concept of socialism and is why the concept of transition to socialism was gradually reduced to what appears today, a caricature.

The process of collectivisation in the Soviet Union started in the early 1930s and by 1936 it was concluded. There was the so-called new constitution, which was presented as the most advanced and democratic constitution in the world (though it was not), and Stalin declared that socialism was built. Thus, according

to Stalin, socialism was built in five years, a tremendously short period in human history. If we believe socialism is an answer, that it suppresses alienation in its entire dimension and therefore has a tremendously important cultural dimension, and if we accept as a relation between the production systems and nature one that is not based on short-run calculation, and that it eradicates polarisation in the global system, we must ask whether the pattern taken in the Soviet Union was able to confront these challenges. It was not able to. Its conception of the new human being was a caricature of the old. The Soviet pattern became the common understanding of Marxism in the Third International and we certainly shared in this view as did the Chinese Communist Party. This helps to explain why it was repeated in China. In China the collectivisation started in 1952; also in 1952 they began nationalising what had remained private property between 1949 and 1952. By 1957 it was more or less finished and they declared socialism was built. Again it took five years and this in a very backward country in which it is difficult to imagine people undergoing such fundamental and drastic change in only five years. It was not even a generation. This was a caricature. Maoism found its limitations here; it had not posed another understanding of the transition. Maoism said what was built was not socialism as it was still on the capitalist road. This had ingredients of the truth, but it did not answer the question of how to build socialism, and therefore how we should conceive of it. It was also still within the framework that socialism could be built in a single country. In the Chinese case it was not a small country, but it was still a single country. Maoism argued that it could be built in China differently, through the Cultural Revolution, etc.

Therefore in the past 10 to 15 years I have gradually come to the conclusion that we must conceive the transition from capitalism to socialism totally differently. Thus I have formulated the national popular long stage as a general rule. The national popular stage is a long transition in which the logic and ingredients of capitalism and logic and ingredients of socialism exist simultaneously and operate in complementary and conflictual ways within all societies of the world. If we look at capitalism's development, it took three centuries of maturation to explode into the Industrial Revolution and reach fully-fledged capitalism, and then entered a crisis after a century and a half (e.g. with the first revolution, the Russian Revolution, and even before with the Paris commune it was entering a series of crises very quickly). Therefore, in history there are no short transitions, as fully-fledged systems require long transitions. Therefore we must look at the transition from capitalism to socialism as a long transition, which also allows us to reintroduce the global dimension. The global dimension does not mean that a

number of countries have revolutions and build socialism in five years; rather a long transition has more and less advanced elements and the internal conflicts between the logics of capitalism and socialism existing simultaneously. Through this a balance between the two sets of logics manifests differently from one place to another.

What distinguishes this long transition from social democracy?

We have to look at the distinction between the long transition and the social democratic evolution and pattern. We must be careful with our concepts, because social democracy is not one thing. It started in the 19th century as Marxist and was based on the idea that 'we want another society liberated from alienation and one of the basic conditions was to suppress the private property of capital.' This was not social democracy as we now understand it, it was Marxism, but they chose the name social democracy. This was associated with a narrow Eurocentric view in which socialism was to be built in the centers disregarding the polarising effect of the globalist expansion of capitalism. They were not concerned with the question of whether or not socialism was on the agenda in Africa or Asia. For many reasons the movement evolved in different directions.

One direction was to theorise a turning point in history, a revolution, in which power systems change and power is transferred from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat. State power is acquired. This could happen in various ways, whether through elections, revolution, changing the constitution, etc. This crystallised in Bernstein and Kautsky. For Bernstein, there was no specific point in time when the state stops being bourgeois, but rather it changes gradually towards the proletariat. We could reread it not in the way that Lenin or Kautsky's critiques have read it, but the way Gramsci read it. Gramsci argued that power is not only in government, but exists in a whole set of power relations in society and not only at the top of the iceberg. Power is not only in the state or government, but also lies below in civil society and cannot be quickly changed. It is here that the ideological and cultural dimensions become a power which helps change society. They are not just reflections of power.

The other trend of social democracy emphasised that they did not care about the final stage of socialism, but wanted to emphasise moving towards socialism by managing capitalism. It argued that capitalism should be managed in the interests of their particular constituencies (i.e. the working people). This became

evident even before the First World War, and continued after when modern social democracy, was nothing more than merging the capitalist system within a frame of historical compromise between capital and labour. It gave a number of advantages to the working class by correcting the fundamental imbalance which is in favour of capital towards the rights of the working class. The vision I suggested for the transition has nothing to do with this understanding of social democracy of today, but rather refers to the earlier vision, which was settled in a wrong way by a metaphysical opposition between evolution and revolution. What happened was revolution and evolution, but in the peripheries. I, therefore, understand it differently than the earlier vision which emphasised the centre.

On the question of alienation, is it possible for society to fully do away with alienation? That is, socialism might not put an end to the domination of capitalism, but can it put an end to the logic of capitalism over the logic of socialism?

There is a bourgeois approach to alienation. To put it strongly, there was gradually a theory of over-determination, which means that the various instances (i.e. economic base, politics, ideology and even culture) move in parallel because they are driven by the same fundamental forces. Therefore what becomes objectively needed and possible occurs at all levels, that is, at the economic, political, ideological and cultural levels. All levels move together in such a way that one cannot say change is due to what happens at one level (e.g. the economic level) or another level (e.g. the political level), because similar changes happen in all the instances. In my reading, this is a very, very mechanical and almost a metaphysical view of society in which a hidden hand or God leads us towards progress in parallel in all aspects of social life. Therefore the productive forces, culture, politics, etc. all develop by themselves in the same direction. This is very close to the ordinary bourgeois ideology of enlightenment and progress, and to the vulgar discourse that markets equal democracy and democracy equals markets.

I am submitting another understanding of social reality in which the various instances have their internal logics and therefore are not necessarily complementary and might even be conflictual. Thus, there is the logic of, for instance, capital accumulation in capitalism, but there is another logic of political power which cannot be reduced to the reflection of the logic of capital accumulation. It might have been easier for me to see this since I'm a person of

the Third World. In our countries it is difficult to reduce the power systems to simply the people making the machinery of capitalism work, because in many cases they do not make it work. Often maintaining their political power is in conflict with the logic of capitalism. Another example is religion; religions are part of ideologies and culture of a society, but they also have their own internal logic. Religions are potentially flexible, but they can also solidify and resist change. I label this under-determination in history and not over-determination. In other words, history is the result of conflict of these various logics. The conflict manifests in different ways with one of the logics dominating and submitting the others to it, but we do not know how it develops in advance.

This, to my mind, explains why it is possible for a society to move into a blind alley and not necessarily towards mechanical progress. It continues through solidification of religion, through social dimensions such as castes, or through power systems which have their own logic. There is a theory of power alienation that has not been developed, though there have been attempts to analyse and develop the concept of power in Marxism (e.g. the Frankfurt school). Power cannot be reduced simply to a person who obeys and efficiently implements the rule of the market. In this sense, in the long transition also there is the conflict of these various instances of society behaving differently. This is the precondition for a concept of freedom of individuals and society; if it were not this way, there would be no need to do anything but to let God lead us to progress. This contradicts the eleventh thesis of Marx on Feurbach, that is, philosophy has tried to understand the world, but the real challenge is to change it.

Do you think post-modernism spells the end of Marxist discourses?

I will be relatively brief because I can refer you to a chapter in my last book on the *Specters of Capitalism*, which discusses this question of post-modernism. To me, post-modernism is the symptom of the crisis at the ideological level. It is an attack against so-called narratives and calls for dismantling positions on ordinary questions and does not posit any concept of what society and liberation are, nor what constitutes change in society and history. It is nothing new, despite the pompous posturing of post-modernism as something new. In each period of deep crisis there have been similar things. Why? Simply because in periods of expansion of forces and counter-forces, discourses are built, which correspond to class interest, and are consistent with strategies and visions, and they have their impact. Simultaneously, they tend to be dogmatised and simplified and reflect different patterns of discourses (e.g. popular, sophisticated, etc.). But

they do have an impact on reality. In the period of crisis, we see the crisis as a result of the breakdown of the previous patterns. Therefore, on the one hand, there is the nostalgia for returning to and remaking the past. On the other hand, there is the idea that we do not know where we are going so let us abandon any myth that we can solve important problems and simply look after small problems. In a period of crisis this is appealing because it can be supported by the democratic argument of pluralism, the relativity of things and so on, which by themselves are not bad things, but they are not enough. This is, I think, the reason for post-modernism's success.

Does polarization in the world system still operate in the context of globalization?

The fundamental tendency towards growing polarisation in the capitalist system does not mean, of course, that things do not change and that the same pattern of polarisation, with the same rules and the same forces, simply continues. Polarisation moves through phases. Not disregarding differences here or there, we can still say that polarisation from the Industrial Revolution in the early 19th century to post-World War II was more or less synonymous with industrialised areas and countries versus non-industrialised countries. Many things went along with this, such as patterns of domination, semi-colonial class alliances, patterns of power systems in the peripheries, etc. We have become so accustomed to this, which is easy to understand, that while it was changing the change was not discovered until it reached a certain level of reality. What started changing after World War II was precisely a result of the success of the national liberation movements, not their failure, which compelled capitalism to adjust. If polarisation is synonymous with non-industrialisation then countries can 'catch up' through industrialising. Whether a country industrialises with the help of private capital or the state and society, which is then called 'socialism', is a matter of differences, but not fundamental with respect to our problem. Therefore the capitalist system started to adjust to the challenge posed by the success of the national liberation movements. One may say that they adjusted successfully and moved from colonial rule to independence, from non-industrialised to integrating industrialisation into the global system. Other patterns of the division of labour, which are no longer based on raw materials, but on manufactured goods came to the fore. Cheap human power is one ingredient in all of this, but so too are efficiency of organisation, marketing, etc.

This led to a new pattern of the global system. The conventional liberal

discourse is that this is the end of centre and periphery, because these countries were non-industrialised, and they are now industrialising, to the extent that new names are given to them (e.g. 'newly industrialised countries', 'newly industrialised economies', 'emerging markets and industries'). We must try to be in advance of events, not continuously behind them, and look for new forms of polarisation, not only theoretically, but those that are already starting to develop, which will be another form of globalisation with polarisation, albeit different from the previous one, but just as bad in its social effects on periphery societies.

This is where I introduce the idea of the five monopolies. Industries can be built in the periphery, including industries which are competitive on open world markets, but they are subject to the five monopolies. First, they are controlled indirectly by the monopoly of technology, which is always there since technologies continuously change from outside and then must be internalised by the peripheries (i.e. the technological changes do not come from inside the societies of the peripheries but from outside). Second, in accordance with this, the control of financial flows; if a country goes the route of the main stream it will get financing usually through international financial flows, etc. If it does not go this route, it cannot develop by itself. Third, the monopoly on the access to natural resources. I am stressing access and not property ownership. For instance, in the case of oil, there is no Arab oil. There is European, American, Japanese oil, which happens to be in the Arab ground. This means you cannot really own it. Eventually, if you can negotiate, you can have some part of the rent, but are not allowed to exploit it for the benefit of the people. Fourth, there is the monopoly of control of information and communications. This form of control happens through access to information and communication, and the control of cultural systems which shape opinions, interfere with, and give or hide knowledge, news, etc. And finally, there is the monopoly on instruments of mass destruction. If a country is 'misbehaving', it gets threatened with bombing and there is no way to respond to this.

Through this a new, modern putting-out system develops; putting-out was in the early capitalist system with handicraft people producing but merchants were bringing raw material, and then collecting the product and taking to the market. The producer was apparently independent as he was a handicraft person who could accept or not accept work, and possibly could even do something else, but in fact he was exploited. On a larger scale, industries, many of which are successful industries in the Third World, are part of this a system of putting-out through the five monopolies. This is the new globalisation. This is a long trend

that moves underground and is why I argue that our task should be how to face these monopolies. It is no longer enough that we should have some competitive industries, but rather we must go beyond that.

Can you explain the relationship between globalization and the current capitalist crisis?

The current capitalist crisis should not be confused with ongoing globalisation as it is. The current capitalist system is in crisis, a crisis of overproduction. Due to the imbalance of forces which, for a variety of reasons, shifted in a short time to benefit capital everywhere (in the West, East, South, etc.) we have moved to a new phase. The balance of forces has shifted to the benefit of capital and is linked to the erosion of the previous systems, which emerged after World War II. This immediately led to the crisis and thus contradicts liberal discourse, which argues that the rule of the market will generate high growth. The rule of the market leads to the opposite because it deepens polarisation (i.e. inequalities), which in turn restricts the market and creates a surplus of capital, which has no outlet in the expansion of the productive system. Therefore they have to manage the current crisis. In other words, the current policies are meant to manage the crisis and nothing more than this. That was even the title of one of my books, *The Management of the Crisis*, and one dimension of this is the management of the crisis at the global level.

They need to create financial outlets at the global level and therefore flexible rates of exchange, speculation, inflation of the prices of real estates and stock exchanges, etc. are all linked to this. This is what globalisation currently is. In other words, globalisation currently is not the reflection of a deep objective tendency of the system, which would simply be a platitude. It is true that the world is shrinking and communications, trade, etc. are increasing the unequal interdependence of various part of the world. But this has been true for a long time; now it is simply deepening. There is nothing qualitatively new in that respect. This has been a long tendency-through internet you can reach any party on the planet in a second, which is precisely what Marx said in the *Communist Manifesto* i.e. that the telegraph is a revolution, because within three hours you can know what is happening in India, Britain, etc. which would have taken three months before. So, this is a deep, long tendency. I think we should see globalisation not as a reflection of that, but as a strategy of dominant capital (which means transnational corporations). It is a strategy to submit and compel all other social realities to adjust. Adjustment is unilateral adjustment. Currently

adjustment means to cut social expenditures, etc. to ensure the crisis is managed and financial markets are widened and so on. Adjustment is a strategy but it is presented as nebulous and as though it was an objective in itself as opposed to seeing it as part of managing the global crisis.

What I am submitting now is fairly optimistic, but I believe it is correct. That is, the system of the management of the crisis is itself in crisis. The expansion of the financial system has reached limits where it starts exploding, which is precisely what happened in South East Asia. We have had some explosions before, but they were minor in comparison with that one. This means that this crisis will deepen and continue, and transfer to other places. It will raise another set of questions about why it started there, and how it would transfer etc. I submit that this pattern of management of the globalised system is in crisis itself and will continue to be more and more so. A big part of this crisis has to do with how affected regions have reacted by rejecting financial globalisation. This is the first step. China and India, who were both on the brink of opening their capital accounts, decided it was not on their agendas for the foreseeable future. Countries like Korea, Malaysia and possibly Thailand are looking for ways and means to re-establish some sort of control. The response has been to move out of financial globalisation into which they entered late in 1992.

The top power system has become conscious of the growing danger. Thus they are looking for ways and means to meet the new danger. For example, the G7 had never said a word against the deregulation of financial flows. Indeed, quite the contrary, as they always said the more deregulation the better it is. Now they argue that regulation of financial flows should be on the agenda. Even the IMF is considering changing its rules, which do not allow for regulation of financial flows. The European Council of Ministers after the elections said that it is not acceptable to have free financial flows, which led to the Russian crisis, and which is feeding the South East Asia crisis. When the enemy starts being aware of the danger, they develop a counter-offensive which boils down to the minimal reform required in order to keep control of the system.

On the other hand, we should move ahead with linking the regulation on global financial flows with internal regulation, with the aim of better distribution of income, of better choices for development linked directly to peoples needs. Regulation of financial flows should be related to popular interests, which is not impossible. I think it will develop in the next few years. This discourse of globalisation should be very, very strongly criticised and we should not say we

are very weak, globalisation is a constraint, and accept this vague language. This new strategy for globalisation tries to eliminate alternatives. But there are alternatives to it and we must fight for it and from there we must move to other battle fronts.

If there is this response from parts of Asia to regulate financial markets, etc., would that not bring the crisis back to the North? Do you think that the North has valid strategies to deal with their own domestic crisis, which was the cause of globalisation in the first instance?

No, at present they are in disarray. When I say 'they' I am referring particularly to the governments of Europe, of which 12 out of 15 happen to be social democratic. They are clever enough to be aware that the resistance from parts of Asia is contributing to moving the crisis back to them, and they do not know what to do. The fact that today they do not know what to do does not mean they will not begin developing a counter-offensive. They will also attempt to deal with their own crisis independently of globalisation. One of the very important aspects of the last meeting of the Council of Ministers of Europe was that they are now prioritising unemployment and not inflation. I think in the present circumstances it shows that the crisis cannot simply be dealt with by trying to push it elsewhere and export it. We have to look at internal responses to it and this is a new stage in the struggle, which is also occurring in the West. The West is not united.

After the Second World War the automobile was crucial for expansion, today it would seem information technology is one of the drivers of capitalist expansion. Do you think that information technology could also contribute to saving capitalism from this crisis?

It is not possible, in my opinion, to answer either yes or no to the question of whether the technological revolution will save capitalism or not. We should not overlook technological change, technological revolutions and progress, but we should understand a number of things. First, it does not necessarily directly bring a solution to the contradictions of capitalism which are shaped by social struggles and the operation of social forces. For instance, the automobile went through a set of technological revolutions, technological advances which developed throughout the 1930s and particularly during World War II in the US and then spread to Western Europe and after that to Japan after the war. It went through a social system, which allowed the historical compromise between

capital and labour, the welfare state and so on. Otherwise the automobile would have had no market. Without the policies of minimal wages, delinking wages from productivity of labour and rejecting the idea that wages should increase year after year in accordance with the rate of increase in average productivity in the nation, the whole scheme would not have worked.

Thus, the technology did not produce, immediately and directly, a solution to capitalism, but simultaneously it can be absorbed by capitalism, and then play a positive role in the further expansion of capitalism. The same is true of information technology today.

Is de-linking still a strategic response to the global crisis by the countries of the global South?

Again one should be very, very careful with the use of the words. De-linking was not an invention of mine. It is an idea that has been taken up by many different people, each giving it a different meaning, often very different from each other. I used it to refer to the task of submitting external relations to the needs of internal progressive social changes and targets. First, you submit external relations to internal changes and therefore de-linking is not synonymous with autarky (i.e. not wanting to know what is happening in the rest of the world). This is a first part of the paradigm. Second, it means the opposite of what is usually called adjustment, which is used, for instance, in the so-called structural adjustment programmes, and is the language of the World Bank. As Third World countries adjust, adjustment is presented as an objective premise; but adjustment to 'supernatural forces', to whom, is not clear. Actually, these are the strategies of transnationals, which in the end is unilateral adjustment for countries of the South.

De-linking tries to compel the other, the stronger, to adjust even in part, to your internal needs. This is not new; it has happened. I mean imperialism had to adjust to the independence of African and Asian countries. The achievement of independence was a struggle. Imperialism was compelled by the victory of the people to adjust to it. Similarly the end of apartheid was not a present to the South African people. Apartheid was conquered by the struggle. This means compelling the centers to adjust (i.e. de-linking) is not something new. Third, delinking is always relative; you compel them more or less and you succeed more or less. It is not that you succeed fully or not at all. It depends on a number of internal and external conditions. It is not as though there is a predetermined

formula (e.g. if you do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 you have de-linked and if you do not do them you have not de-linked). It is obvious that if you are a small, vulnerable, poor country, your margin is very narrow and if you are more efficient with capacities, you have a larger margin. Therefore the concept of de-linking is relative.

Fourth, the concept of de-linking is relative to and must be linked to the phase of capitalism and the nature of the challenge. If the nature of the challenge is different from what it has been in the past the patterns of de-linking must be understood differently. If I am right in my proposals along the lines of the analysis of the five monopolies then de-linking today means restricting and compelling the centers to adjust on these five counts. That is to fight on the grounds of the capacity to absorb and develop technologies; the capacity to de-link and move out of the global financial system and re-establish control over finance; the capacity to decide on the use of raw materials and nature; capacity in the area of information and communication technology to develop our own systems and therefore our own capacity and so on

What is the role of social movements in the struggle against global capitalism?

Social movements are the new fashion at the moment, but they have always existed. Society is made up of different social interests, which to various degrees organise and develop their own targets, and take very different forms. It can take a more organised form in the shape, for instance, of trade unions, political parties and mass organisations on the one side. Also, on the other side, entrepreneurial organisations, middle-class associations of professionals and others have always existed. Now, it is true that there are periods in history where the social forces seem to be totally dismantled, unorganised, and atomised, and where the ruling forces (i.e. capital) can rule the whole thing from their point of view without organised resistance. This is very dangerous not only because of the dramatic consequences on the conditions of the people, but also this leads to the atomisation of society and causes many to lose hope (a propos of our discussion on post-modernism).

Disarray is compensated by reactionary ways to meet the challenges. The people who cannot defend themselves on the grounds of class, politics, party, elections, revolutions, demonstrations, trade unions, etc. go back to family, ethnicity, religion and other forms of organisation, which, in my view, are not meeting the challenges and therefore are illusory and can even be manipulated in many cases. This is the danger of such a period we have been and are possibly still in.

One of the things which is dramatic in history is that once certain forms of organisation have proven efficient at particular points in time we tend to keep them as if they will continue to be valid and efficient forever. For example, forms like trade unions, though I do not want to argue that trade unions are useless today, especially in South Africa, and political parties in their previous forms, which were appropriate at a particular time, are not necessarily still appropriate. For instance, the patterns of organisation in trade unions and the patterns of organisation of communist parties (i.e. democratic centralism) are not necessarily the most appropriate for the current conditions. This pattern of organisation corresponded to another age of society where there was less communication than today (e.g. more communications through newspapers and radio than TV, which is the primary form today). This is why the youth is looking at those forms of organisations with reservations and doubts. They are autocratic to a large extent and hierarchical, and perhaps not appropriate in the new circumstances. This is why people speak of new social movements as opposed to trade unions, political parties and so on which we inherited from the past.

What in your view is the role of intellectuals and their responsibilities in the current conjuncture?

I will take Gramsci as a starting point. Society always produces at least one and possibly two types of intellectuals. There are intellectuals (i.e. conservative and reactionary) who play a very important role in legitimising the power system. I am specifically referring to the active intellectuals who are not just following, but are elaborating the ideology and themes. For instance, neo-liberalism has been constructed in a very systematic way; it has not come about spontaneously. It has been constructed through the Tri-lateral Commission, through meetings of billionaires in Davos, etc. It has been organised. Usually schools and universities are part of this production and reproduction of the dominant ideology. I think one of the very important insights of Marx is that 'the ideology of the dominant class is the dominant ideology of the society'. This means that the dominant class's ideology is internalised by the dominated classes. Thus, there is this first type of intellectual which facilitates this. I am not lumping these intellectuals together with holders of diplomas, most of whom are technicians of something and are not asking these questions. The intellectuals I am referring to produce and reproduce the ideology.

When the new social forces are mature enough, and when the dominant system is in crisis, then the dominated classes start creating their own intellectuals and

here again it is not a matter of diplomas. If you look at the 19th century, the working class produced a lot of intellectuals. For example, the leaders of trade unions are intellectuals no less than most academics. These are what Gramsci called organic intellectuals, and they produce the ideology, discourses, debates, and forms of organisation of the dominated classes. There is a continuous interaction between them, working class and progressive social forces and struggles. If we move down from those generalities to Africa today, Africa also produced organic intellectuals from the 1940s and 1950s - those who were associated with the development of the national liberation movement. This produced many perspectives against various forms of oppression not just the demand for national independence. (e.g. against the culture of oppression, the affirmation of the culture personality, etc.). The intellectuals during that period were anchored amongst students who were highly politicised and on the left. Even if they were not the most radical they were connected with the mass movement and the national liberation movement. That was a brilliant period and, of course, it took different shapes. There was cultural nationalism amongst some of them, a deepening in understanding of Marxism among others, etc. There was a variety, but they all asked a similar question about how to be useful to our people in this struggle for liberation.

What followed were nationalist populist regimes, during which many if not all of those intellectuals became part of the new power system. Some of them tried to be honest with themselves and tried to implement what they believed in. Others turned quickly into daily opportunists, as usual. What resulted was that the intellectuals began to lose their power and importance, whereas previously what the intellectuals thought was very important to the national liberation movements. By 'intellectual' I mean the young radicalised. Then, when they had power in their hands, it was no longer important what the intellectuals thought; what became important was whether you were in a position to make decisions and obtain money. All these became important and you started to lose the importance of intellectuals in a process of depoliticisation. You also started to lose the potential intellectuals, particularly the youth in universities. The politicians, including party politicians, turned into bureaucrats instead of being ideologues; and managers turn into politicians in the bad sense of the term, looking after positions and so on. I am afraid this is still where we are in Africa at this point, that is, in a period of disarray, of loss of the goals of the intellectuals, which goes along with the depoliticisation of the universities, with careerism, with lots of things of the time.

The question is whether we are at a turning point at which there will be a new role of intellectuals in Africa. This is the discourse on the African Renaissance which, in my opinion, is neither black nor white, neither totally good nor totally bad, but a mixture of the two. It is not bad in the sense that it indicates there is an awareness of a problem and an awareness that if Africa wants to get out of the crisis it has to create its own vision, its own societal project and its own capacity to analyse. Therefore, in the intellectual sense, you can call it renaissance. This is the positive. The negative is perhaps that renaissance intellectualism and cultural renaissance are always ambiguous and ambivalent. It can be just rhetoric to continue down the same path.

You mentioned the African Renaissance but standing in contrast to it, particularly in terms of 21st-century thinking, is Afro pessimism, which suggests the prospects in Africa are bleak given the current crisis and conflicts taking place on the continent.

You see, being an African, I could not psychologically at any point in time accept Afro-pessimism. I do not want to agree on that ground, because this is the ground of racism, which argues that we are so because we are bound to be so and we are marginalised to the lowest position in the global system and therefore it should continue to be so. That is absolutely not acceptable. My response is not to deny we are at the lower level because that would be hiding reality. But we must ask why we are there and what should be done to move out of it? So there is no *a priori* pessimism.

What is your perspective on post-apartheid South Africa?

I first came to South Africa in 1992, and have visited the country more than once since then and hope to go back. I would like to go more often because I think what is happening there is very important, not only for South Africa, and maybe it would be pompous to say for the whole of Africa and the world, but it has an important impact possibly. It is a great country, but simultaneously it is a country that is meeting the challenges in the most horrible way.

South Africa, it has been said, is a microcosm of the world system. For historical and possibly geographical reasons, concentrated in a territory is what you would find at the global level - a First World, with people with standards of living and patterns of consumption which are similar to Europeans and North Americans, and an industrialising Third World, which is the world of labour with relatively

high productivity, low wages, terrible forms of oppression, exploitation in modern industries and so on. The Third-World dimension is basically the black people; they are the working classes in the industrial areas, whether originally mining or manufacturing. You also have the Fourth World, which is the marginalised. It is the Bantustan; it is the suburbs with the informal settlements, unemployment, criminality, and no hope of surviving. You do not find all of this in one country. But you have all three in South Africa. Since the global picture is ugly, it is even uglier when concentrated in one country. It is an obscene society. But the good thing is that apartheid never worked. First, why did it not work? Because the working class never stopped fighting and never accepted the system. The result was that the ruling minority had difficulty achieving what they thought they could. That is, they could not achieve good governance (i.e. stability by restricting people, allowing criminality in the black areas, but not reaching the whites) and efficient industries able to compete. Later the project included exporting and servicing the restricted internal markets. The industries were not that competitive and they were not able to govern the system in a stable form. This reached such a point that dominant capitalists started thinking we should accept some reforms. The initial impetus for change did not come from them, but was the result of their defeat and the success of the struggle.

It is not by chance that apartheid's demise came in the early 1990s, because one of the blackmailing tools was that it was the vanguard of anti-communism. They cited in support of this their successful interference in Angola and Mozambique, and their role as policemen of the region. They also argued that they are geographically the connection between the Atlantic and Indian oceans (e.g. there were submarine bases in Cape Town). The local ruling class was fully able to use the anti-communist tool, but it lost a lot of its weight after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. As a result international dominant capital started to think about adjusting to it. They started to think that instead of having the system functioning on the basis of a small minority, they should enlarge it by including the middle classes of the so-called coloreds, Indians, and new African bourgeoisie - which would allow them to continue to run the system in an acceptable way. That was their plan.

Why I am optimistic is because if this is the plan, it cannot work and we should therefore have a counter-plan, which should win. Why can't their plan work? Because the contradictions are so deep that it cannot make enough concessions to all the masses and it cannot impose enough sacrifices on those who should pay for it. In South Africa, there are 10% of people whose standard of living should

be cut to a 1/3 of what it is. This is a tremendous waste, but it is not easy for capital to impose that on people for a lot of reasons, including racism of course. On the other hand, because of this, what concessions can there be? They can make concessions by creating a black bourgeoisie, which is what they are doing and it is not exclusively a political bourgeoisie. It is done by having positions in administration, government, power here and there, as well as an entrepreneurial class, a new comprador one, and financing and supporting it. What can they give to 70% of the people of this country? Absolutely nothing. The people who struggled in the long struggle rightfully expected from their victory more than this. They are not naïve and are not expecting it immediately, but do expect that things should be moving towards change. If they see nothing is coming, I think, they will start fighting again. This is why we need to continue struggling, because the contradictions we see at the global level are concentrated in a territory which is a political unit; it is a state. In front of this, what is the alternative? The alternative is the following.

For the left, that is for the people who are honest enough to think that finally what they want is precisely to turn this ugly society into an acceptable one (i.e. to have growth and development for the majority of people). This is the fundamental and important debate. There are those who say, well, things being the way they are and South Africa being an average-sized country in the global system, which is deeply involved in it with a number of modern activities, which needs technology, finance, know-how, etc., we must also play by the rules of the game and move up in the hierarchy through policies giving top priority to becoming efficient, competitive and open. Perhaps some of them do not necessarily believe in opening up in the sense of the World Bank or IMF with absolutely no control over anything, but argue for opening up if we have control to a certain extent and give that priority. They argue that this would work. It has worked in the case of Korea, though Korea is not a beautiful society; it is ugly. Why has it worked? First, it has worked, because there were conducive international conditions. Imperialism gave them concessions that they did not give anybody else. They tolerated nationalism and even opened the US market to Korean exports. They did this precisely in order to have the experience succeed. These are not the conditions of South Africa today and nobody is going to facilitate its development by opening up markets and giving privileges.

Second, the social conditions here are more scandalous and the association to race makes them even more scandalous than anywhere else. Thus the capacity of the system to beat the challenge is much less. I think that if South Africa gives

World Bank style opening up top priority it is going to deteriorate very quickly into disaster. They will neither achieve their targets and become more competitive, nor will it make possible minimal progressive social changes. It will immediately lead to either chaos or struggle. Priority must be given for an extended period to move from this obscene society to a normal society, which thereafter can participate in the global transition to global socialism. The priority should be given to that. What does it mean? It means that if we are the First, Second, Third and Fourth World in this territory we should give priority not to competitive industries to export, but to reshaping the productive system in order to produce things for the people (i.e. better housing, better access to water, electricity, food, transport, and all sorts of things).

What are the prospects of socialism in the 21st Century?

It is not easy to answer such a question and I do not have an answer. I doubt that anybody could have an answer. I think we should keep in mind that the main strategic target should be to move into the long transition. To put a date on this and ask whether we have moved into it today or not is difficult to answer. The question is how to compel capitalist logic to make compromises with other logics and then after that how to develop the other logics. I am relatively optimistic and do not see why this should not occur. Capitalist globalisation as a means of managing the crisis is itself in crisis and therefore the conditions are moving gradually from a strategy to non-strategy, from defensive positions to a counter-offensive. Capitalist globalisation has met resistance; people have resisted it in different ways (e.g. from survival strategies to the defence of sectoral interests to a number of things which were always conceived in a defensive way). To defend what we already have we must move from there to counter-offensive, which needs to have a minimal number of strategic common targets that crystallise into political programmes. Such programmes must be owned and championed by social forces.

REFLECTIONS

Langa Zita

Twenty One Theses on Key Questions of the Socialist Transition

Introduction

Over the past few years the SACP has attempted a process of fundamental renewal, necessitated by its long history and the changing context in which it finds itself. The 1990s was critical for the party particularly in the light of the fall of East European socialism. It was therefore incumbent on the party to re open, to reflect and rethink its project in the light of these epochal developments. The twenty one theses that are here presented is an attempt to present if summarily the body of ideas, the themes that we have had to address, the conclusions that I think we have reached. In doing so, I am approaching these questions with an air of openness, catalyzing indeed what should be a common search for all those who are committed to a genuine pursuit of the ideals of liberty, equality and solidarity. Ideals that are the cornerstone of the socialist project.

(1) Which Socialism and Why Socialism?

Certainly the socialism that we seek to realize is not the child that was lost in the storm in Eastern Europe. We respect the attempt. However what we seek to achieve will indeed have, both in its methodology, in its culture, in its embryonic features something different, better than what occurred in Eastern Europe, as well as better than the capitalism that we are presently experiencing. Despite the setback and the crisis of the idea of socialism, we remain committed to a project that we call socialism. Present day capitalist society continues to be unbearable. It continues to bring with it untold misery, unemployment as well as coexisting with various forms of oppression and exploitation. Why do we still want to retain the word socialism? It is important to insist that what we are fighting for is a society that is beyond the present capitalist society. As long as we do not restrict our definition of socialism to a system but a society whose social balance of power is in the favour of the subalterns, those who have been victims of capitalism. Not to do this, not to define such a society as socialism, runs the risk of imprecision. More important in our definition of socialism is to insist that socialism is not a system. Socialism as a system died with the collapse of the Berlin wall. Socialism is but the reconstruction of society in the interest of giving free expression to people's experienced, felt and spiritual needs. It is the

concrete emanation of the reality of sociality.

(2) Character of the Revolution in the Developing World

In thinking about socialism, we cannot proceed as we have done in the past, to present this challenge as similar in content in the developing and in the developed world. We need to be clear that for Marx socialism is rendered possible not because capitalism is immoral, but that the productive forces and relations of capitalism render possible for the first time a genuine and sustainable sharing of the proceeds of production. To the extent that the underdeveloped societies do not have these levels of development they are not capable of laying the foundation for socialism. In raising this question we do not argue that there cannot be development of the forces of production through socialist forces whether as expressed through the role of the state or socialized relations such as cooperatives. We make just one important fact that statism and co-operatives do not emerge as the most 'self evident' forms of economic organization in an economy based on the market mechanism. Two hundred years since the rise of capitalism, with its ideology of individualism, working for others, selflessness is not the most natural response to societal challenges. This proclivity to the individual self, to selfishness is further enhanced by its irrefutable capacity to dynamise the process of wealth creation. If one of the preconditions for socialism and therefore one of the objectives in the struggle for socialism is the building of forces of production, it is important that we draw on the strengths of this self evident factor. Capital's political economy has always been a political economy based on individual pursuit of profits. When Marx in the Communist Manifesto extols the virtues of capitalism, these were achievements realized not in pursuit of socialism, but in pursuit of individual profit. However in the light of the history of the past 150 years we can also say that development cannot be only achieved through capitalist means. There can also be other forms of development, in particular through statist forms. This was the case both in the former Soviet Union and in the East Asian model as in Japan, South Korea etc. Be that as it is, it is important to insist that the East Asian state capitalism was capitalism. It was a statism developed in the service of the capitalist system. To the extent that it achieved growth, it proves the salience of creating within the context of the political economy of the transition a legitimate and dynamic space for the capitalist tendency.

Statism is related to but is not the same as a socialist development path. Socialist developmental initiatives are essentially about the effective participation and

control of producers both in the process and in the proceeds of production. But socialist production methods do not by themselves usher in socialism. This becomes very clear when we look at the historical role of markets in socialist oriented societies. However the socialist tendency does not only express itself as a positive pursuit of certain outcomes as in the pursuit of socialistic enterprise such as co ops. It also expresses itself as negativity- an oppositionist force against the dominant power of capital. This has been the principal expression of socialist forces under capitalism. The resistance or the socialism of strikes. It is our contention that if the challenge of socialist forces is both to pursue the objective of the development of the forces of production as well as the pursuit of an alternative socialist oriented society, it is proper that such a project be pursued through a popular front that involves all these three tendencies- the socialist, the statist and the capitalist tendencies. To restate, by socialist tendency we mean the creation in the political economy of national democracy a pole for socialist oriented sector. Such a sector should allow for the establishment of community enterprises, local government entities, co operatives, pension funds investments for social oriented outcomes, ethical investments etc. The intention is to create a sector in the economy that whilst participating in the dominant economy seeks to internalize in its design outcomes that are not about the narrow pursuit of profit maximization, even if they have to be profitable.

It is fundamentally important to make the point that the socialist tendency that we are referring to here is fundamentally defensive. These are socialist measures that purely seek to protect the working class and the popular forces from the vagaries and the pain of living under capitalism particularly in the peripheries. They do not in themselves usher in socialism even if they would be a dominant feature of the socio-economic formation. They are what I would call measures of the low level of socialism. This is the socialism of Engels, Lenin and the young Marx. It reduces socialism to measures that express what Marx called the 'political economy of the working class'. Socialism of economic measures. This socialism is indispensable in the struggle against capitalism and in the early stages of the transition to socialism. 20th century socialism expressed itself in this way, even Chavez's 21st century socialism bears this imprint. However this is not the socialism of the Marx of Capital and the Grundrisse. For him socialism is not a matter of economic measures, it is a post economic phenomenon. It occurs in the context of the transcendence of economics even if this transcendence issues from economics. We will come back to this point. In the same vein we need to develop a statist sector in the economy. This is necessitated by the fact that capitalism has since its beginning needed the state to govern its

operation. But more importantly the tumultuous changes that capitalism brought to society meant that the state had to intervene on the side of ordinary people to address poverty in urban settlements etc. In the context of structural change we have to address the developmental challenge which implies developing an industrial policy and the capacity to implement it. Part of this state capacity historically has also included the creation of parastatals for energy, for telecommunication, transport as well as for ordinary commercial interventions that can be deemed to be in the national interest. The imperative of a statist role in the development of the country means that without being blind to the limits of statism, it cannot be anathema to talk about nationalization of certain critical parts of the economy.

(3) What are the features of capitalism that we are seeking to transform?

There are many aspects of capitalism that we can say we abhor. These may range from poverty, inequality, ecological problems, unemployment etc. But are these not expressions of a society that is dominated by the logic of capitalism. Are these not expressions of a society that transforms almost every aspect of life to a sale, to a commodity. We need to see capitalism not only as a system that extracts surplus value, important as this is. Importantly capitalism is a system that subordinates every aspect of life to the extraction of surplus value. It gives a price to every thing. Capitalism makes every relationship of life a relationship of economics. It generalizes and upholds the principle expressed through the ultimate capitalist question 'what is in it for me?'. We need as socialists to ask the question, in what ways can we oppose the subjection of life to a price. The evolution of public goods has always had two dimensions- the use of public funds to enhance capital accumulation as well to protect the people from the vagaries of capitalism i.e. Decommodification. Decommodification is an attempt to prohibit the reach of capitalism in every aspect of our lives. It is about the extension of public goods. In this latter meaning it is about what Marx called the advancement of the political economy of labour. It is a movement towards socialism. How in the context of limited commodification (an expression of underdevelopment) can we address the challenge of decommodification? In the context of underdevelopment there are not always enough resources to promote decommodification. In such a situation therefore we have got to be involved in the dirty business of building the forces of production whilst simultaneously, using the increased wealth to address the needs of the people.

(4) How should we understand capitalism today?

In a path breaking essay entitled: *Life and Times of Capitalism*, Goran Therbon identified a number key developments in developed capitalism which he felt accorded to some of the key demands of the Communist Manifesto. More importantly in his essay was his evaluation of the political economy of certain aspects of advanced capitalism. He noted for instance that the dominant section of capital was financial capital, which was based on the pension funds of workers. He observed in both the United States and in the OECD countries, more than 65% of wealth was of this nature, whilst not subjectively worker owned, it was objectively so. Such transformation in the character of capitalism has to some degree occurred even here to the South African socio economic formation. Whilst this contradiction of worker owned but capitalist controlled wealth is rarely raised, we in the South African Left have opened up this question for social scrutiny. The pension fund sector is very big and has resources amounting to trillions of rands. The question is how to transform objective ownership to a subjective factor that can ensure that these resources are strategically if sensitively used to transform the system. What is critical is what the working class movement demands from the capitalist class with regard to the deployment of these funds. In South Africa the democratic government passed legislation that clearly defined the role of workers in administration of individual pension funds. The resolution by the presidential job summits for trade unions and business to deploy a portion of their funds for developmental work is a step in the right direction. What is the implication of this character of capitalism for the socialist project today in South Africa? It would seem to us that there is a deeper need to look at this working class owned wealth in the context of the developmental challenges facing the country sensitive to the original role of these funds which is to fund the welfare of workers when they retire. If these resources are creatively deployed it is possible that the workers could make demands on the banks who husband these resources and demand a certain portion that can be deployed to the alternative sector such as coops etc and in the process promote a progressive orientation of the economy.

(5) Realm of necessity and the realm of Freedom

Initially we had defined capitalism not only as the exploitation of labour power, but essentially as the overall colonization of almost every aspect of our lives by the principles of the market. To giving a price to a very human relationship. In his monumental work the *Grundrisse*, Marx develops a conceptualization that is critical to our thinking about the economy and social life under capitalism and under socialism. The economy whether under capitalism or under socialism is a

necessary sphere of human activity. All societies whether traditional or advanced have to undertake certain activities that are necessary at the bare minimum for their survival - i.e. to feed, to clothe and to shelter themselves. They are all compelled to do this. This is an activity that is a necessity. Marx referred to these activities as activities that operated within the framework of the realm of necessity. Related to the realm of necessity but opposed to it is the realm of freedom. Once the necessary pursuits of life are completed, human beings are free to be the themselves, to do as they please. They can then be able to pursue activities for sociality. To inter-act with other human beings not for gain, but for love. This is the Marxist understanding of freedom. Economic development makes it easier for people to solve their necessary needs. Backward societies, in which people have to work for a day in order to find something to eat, are not the most appropriate bases for the realization of freedom and the establishment of socialistic relations. They have to battle merely to survive.

In the *Grundrisse* Marx argued that as a result of the increasing use of science in production, the realm of necessity will shrink and possibilities for human freedom will be advanced. Of course in pursuit of narrow power objectives capital would prevent these break-throughs from being beneficial to everyone. For the purposes of this discussion, we could argue that in present day capitalist societies the realm of necessity dominates the realm of freedom. That is why those who are lucky to have work, have to work for eleven months, five days a week, eight hours a day whilst an alternative possibility exists, in which working at about half the time, society can reproduce itself. Socialism would then be a different society in which the realm of freedom is the dominant organizing principle of society. Such a possibility cannot occur in the context of scarcity. It is post scarcity phenomenon. Sociality - ability of individual to relate as human beings - without a price- cannot be achieved when people have to battle just to make ends meet. In principle it can be argued therefore that any society that can restrict the realm of necessity in its operation, any society whose dominant organizing principle is sociality and freedom is a socialist society. In the past we have emphasized production relations as the only definition of the character of a society with out much regard to the levels of its development. With out ignoring social relations- we also need to address the level of the forces of production and the liberatory potential entailed by them.

(6) Realm of Necessity and Dependence on Capitalism

Under capitalism the realm of necessity - a realm that exists in all modes of

production- assumes specific features that are novel and specific to capitalism. In this mode of production the producers loose their capacity to produce for themselves. They find themselves totally dependent on the system. The system gives those who are lucky to be employed income as workers and offers them a multitude of commodities to choose from as consumers. This dependence assumes ugly aspects when we consider the fact in its pursuit for profit the system manufactures artificial needs which remain unmet for many. A fundamental component of the socialist transition will be to deepen those forms of activities that promote independence of working people from capital. Critical in this regard is the development of alternative economy, an alternative aesthetics, an authentic definition of needs etc. The work that we are beginning in our townships around the concept of people's economy, a township economy that includes , co operatives, centers for self production, food security initiatives are informed by this perspective. A fundamental challenge moving forward is to strengthen the independent capacity of the working class to reproduce itself and to have this as a critical element of an alternative political economy.

(7) Socialism and the Democratic Revolution

One of the most engaging questions of socialist politics is the relationship between socialism and the democratic revolution. The reasons for the complexity of this question are many, but one of them relates to the fact that there was a strong held view in the Left that the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution are distinct revolutions. At best the Bolshevik tradition sought to address the relationship between the democratic and the socialist revolution. The 1993 Strategy conference of the SACP sought to redefine this understanding. Our view is that there is no different democratic and different socialist revolution. There is only one democratic revolution. The critical inauguration of this revolution was the French Revolution fought under the fundamental banners of: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Even the Paris Commune, the Russian and the Chinese revolutions are variants of these democratic revolutions that sought to solve the same democratic questions in a different way. Of course in the latter two revolutions democracy was more in essence than in form. What the French revolution inaugurated was an ongoing democratic revolution that predates capitalism, even if it anticipated it. This democratic revolution has co existed with capitalism. This co existence has complicated both the democratic revolution and capitalism giving rise to various mutations of the capitalist system from *laissez faire*, state capitalism, fascism and social democracy. Despite the negative development of fascism,

overall capitalism has had to adapt itself to the needs of the people, as a result of struggles. Overall we can discern a progressive solution of these problems particularly in the developed centers. To the extent that there remains a contradiction between the capitalist system and the working class and working people, it is possible that the contradiction will work itself in such a way that a post capitalist society emerges. In this struggle the existence of the democratic space and on going democratization is both the framework for and the instrument for transcending the capitalist society. To restate, it is today unthinkable to suppose that there can be socialism worthy of a future without democracy.

(8) Socialism and the Market

How should we understand the role of the market in a socialist society? Historically Marxism has always been critical of the anarchist character of markets. This was due to the fact that people under capitalism operate as atomized individuals each seeking to fend for themselves. As a result of this the capitalist mode of production is a turbulent mode of production, and the market mechanism is an important cause of this turbulence. In opposition to this chaos, Marxists presented planning as the alternative distributive mechanism in a socialist society. It is clear that planning has serious problems. The over-planned soviet system was incapable of flexibility, which over a period of time caused its implosion, and subsequent self destruction. It would however be wrong to condemn all forms of planning. At the same time it is important for us to tease out the both the benefits and the disadvantages of the market mechanism. It would seem to me that we have to factor the notion of complexity in our thinking about the market mechanism as well as the plan. Industrial civilization is by definition complex. Can a society of forty four million people each with their different needs and wants be able to plan the needs and wants of each individual? Only if you assume that these needs and wants are the same, when you see people as a life-less homogenous whole can you think that their needs can be solved by the bureaucratic insight of a planner. It is in this context therefore that we can see the strength of the market mechanism in co-coordinating the needs and wants of millions of people. Even a society in which the dominant part of the economy is socialistically owned by the workers through worker owned enterprises would still need to utilize the market mechanism if it operates in the context of a complex and industrial civilization.

However it would be short sighted to hand over the entire mechanism for

organizing the economy to the market. Indeed we have to advance ways in which the market mechanism is socialized. We need to circumscribe, embed and curtail the market mechanism with values of socialism. However to the extent that those interventions will be at the level of the realm of necessity, they will for ever be animated and informed by the logic of capital. The capitalist aspect of the market mechanism will for ever rear its head. In other words to the extent that the economic relations occur in the context of complexity, a product of industrial civilization, to that extent it is impossible to organize them outside of the market mechanism- which is the appropriate institution of responding to this complexity. To the extent that the market mechanism even in instances where it is under-girded by socialist relations, if they operate in a context of industrial complexity will be forced to produce for profit. Each of the individual units whether collectively owned will be forced to compete with each other. If this is the case such an economy will be anarchic and unstable. Can such an economy be called socialist? Complexity renders socialism impossible if socialism is understood only in ownership terms. Socialism has to be seen as a social experience that occurs outside the realm of necessity. The realm of necessity whether socialized or not is not capable of realizing socialism, due to the complexity of industrial society. Socialism has to be seen as the expansion of the realm of freedom as the dominant and guiding principle and impulse of society. Socialism therefore should be about the rolling back of the realm of necessity which in the context of industrial society is synonymous with capital. In building a socialist society our interest in the realm of necessity, the realm of the forces and relations of production, is as far as it makes it possible for us to have the material means to achieve freedom, to achieve sociality- which by definition cannot be understood as a system, but as social relations that are entered into amongst free individuals- beyond the logic of a system. Socialism is a society in which the logic of system is retained but is subjected to the logic of human relationships. Where the system works for human beings as against human beings being cogs of the machine.

Building socialism means restricting the sphere of heteronomy which is the same as the sphere of complexity, assigning it a small part in the reproduction of society. Heteronomy is how today's capitalist society operates. It is a reflection of the division of labour, a result of the complexity of industrial society. A consequence of which is that, it is impossible to think about socialism in simplifying ways- as only a product of the ownership of the means of production. We have to ask ourselves to what extent does industrial complexity impact on the original conception of socialism as only a function of ownership

of the means of production. Whilst retaining the importance of ownership we have to ask ourselves whether society cannot impose a socialist logic to the operations of the system such that socialist outcomes - this time understood as socialistic humanly experienced outcomes are realized even in the context of the existence of private property. The point therefore is how the system, with its heteronomy can be forced to give scope to the logic of autonomy, where in socialistic relations amongst the people, can be given more reign. Therefore from this context socialism can be understood as a system in which all citizens are guaranteed security of income and habitat in a manner that is proper to human beings- i.e. with less time and less effort.

In Marx's words in the Grundrisse:

“In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins only when labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all possible modes of production. With his development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants, but at the same time the forces of production which satisfy these wants also expand. Freedom in this field can only consist of socialized men, the associated producers rationally regulating their interchange with nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by blind forces of nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nevertheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its basic prerequisite.”

How can this be done? There are three ways in which this can be achieved. The first one would be a basic income- equivalent to a living wage which could be given every one unconditionally. The effect of this would be that no one should be forced to sell themselves to capital. The basic income grant in Europe (not in South Africa) is about this. Our own version of R100, 00 does not amount to a basic income as the basic income in our country is approximately R1400, 00. The second measure would be the reduction of necessary working time. This could take the form of the reduction of the working week. This particular measure could assist in reducing unemployment and simultaneously allow workers to

have more time to engage themselves in activities of their choice. These two measures are most appropriate in the developed world where the level of production is most developed, and the volumes of wealth can be shared in the form of a basic income grant. However we in the semi periphery can investigate the possibility of adapting most of these reforms for the specific conditions of the Third World. The third measure seeks to combine the socialism of economic measures and that of a post economics. This could be achieved by creating spaces for individual and collective self production and consumption. Others call this 'prosumption'. Informed by the strategic challenge of restricting the dominance of the realm of necessity, we can ensure that self production and consumption is undertaken through use of the most advance methods of science, so that time is not spent in toil but in activities for the self.

The latter measure is the one that seems to be appropriate for the Third world. Whilst drawing sustenance from participating in the dominant economy, an alternative subsistence sector can be developed in the beginning through transfers from the dominant economy. The challenge would be to develop this subsistence sector in such a way that overtime it is able to stand on its own. Standing on its own does not mean that there would be no relationship between the dominant economy and the subsistence economy other than the income transfers. Deliberate planning could ensure that exchanges in favour of the subsistence economy are maintained in order to ensure a measure of sustainability, efficiency in the subsistence economy. Another fundamental aspect of this advanced subsistence factor is its ecological dimension. Its demands on the biosphere are a fraction of what the dominant industrial based economy demands.

(9) Economics and Politics before and after capitalism

It is important to note that before the advent of capitalism there was no need for the development of a science of economics. Relations of production amongst the people were self evident. They were varied. Others were relatively egalitarian as with the primitive communalism of Sub Saharan Africa. Others were unequal and exploitative as with feudalism in Europe or with unique forms of class distinction of the Asiatic mode of production. The important thing is that everyone knew his or her location in the social scheme of things. You were either a master or a slave. Under capitalism human relationships assume the relationship of exchange amongst things. They are relationship of commodities or goods that are bought and sold. Even human beings as labour power are a

commodity. A critical dimension of the exchange of commodities is the change of commodities that have equivalent labour time that is embodied in them. The rise of automation as reflected by computerization in production is increasingly reducing labour power as an important factor in production. This development is presently experienced as structural unemployment or the demise of a work based society. Marx anticipated this development in 1857 in the *Grundrisse*. His view was that when labour ceases to be a dominant category in the measurement of wealth, the objective basis for the extraction of surplus value would be obsolete. Wealth distribution would have to be based on political criteria.

Part of the challenge for the left in both the developed and the underdeveloped world is how to respond to this demise of a work centered society. The problem for the underdeveloped world is that this development is occurring in the context of an underdeveloped society in which as a result of the enclave character of the economy- there is in our case 40% unemployment. As a result of our maldevelopment we do not have the resources to cushion and protect those excluded from this economy. It would seem to us that the only effective way to deal with a capitalism that is promoting the 'end of work' is to walk on many legs with it and alongside it informed by the framework of three tendencies that we elaborated in thesis 2. In addition to the three tendencies we would argue that there is a scope for various circuits of capital with various logics. For instance we could have various economic actors capable of competing with dominant capital in the context of their local economies. These could be small and medium sized enterprises with effective local participation and sometimes global reach as you have in Italy's northern regions and in China. Within this context there could also be a significantly elaborated decommodified sector- a self providing sector. The dominant global law of value that is based on robotized production does not have to be the only active law of value. Such a confluence of economic actors could have the potential over a period of time to undo enclavity and promote economic development that can effectively create the condition of a developed economy in the underdeveloped world.

(10) Socialism and Private Property - Two Programs for Socialism

In the 1991 program of the party we make a distinction between productive private property and personal private property. The former is what we call the means of production. Historically we have understood that one of the critical contradictions is that of social production and individual control of the means of production. Historically Marxism and the Left have always emphasized the

question of ownership of the means of production. There is a view that ownership is no longer an issue because of the separation between ownership and management of capitalist enterprises today. Despite this reality we argue that ownership remains key. In this context we need to distinguish between public ownership and socialization of the means of production which are linked but separate concepts. The challenge is to advance the aspect of social ownership of the means of production in the main economy whilst defending public ownership particularly with regard to public goods. Despite this fact we need to be open to the debate on the possibility of socialism without socialization of the means of production. Van der Pijl the leading exponent of the radical basic income grant argues that in the developed world as a result of the levels of development of the forces of production, it is possible to give every one a decent income without the obligation to work. A society in which people do not have to work for others in order to reproduce themselves is no longer a capitalist system. In what way can we adapt such an insight to the reform agenda of our own society?

(11) Socialism and the National Question.

In the South African case the issue of the class contradiction has been related by Marxists to the national question. Essentially the thesis is that the nation that is in creation occurs in the context of an existing capitalism. In such a context the leading class force in the national democratic revolution is the working class, which in leading the national democratic revolution lays the foundation for the struggle for socialism. Historically it is clear that the working class played a central and leading role in struggle against national oppression. There is however a distinction to be made between the mobilization and participation of the working class and its capacity to control and shape the character of the emerging society. The working class in its varied forms of mobilization and organization has to create an environment in which it is able to inscribe its perspectives on the new society. A number of critical questions most of which are an expression of the inconclusive national question have arisen ranging from quotas in sport, affirmative action in public and economic life as well as black economic empowerment. The working class and the proletariat in general have to fight not only for the inclusion but for the centrality of its perspective in the resolution of these questions thus linking the resolution of the national question with the question of socialism. In doing so we will not be seeking to paint nationalism red, but mainly seeking to draw the potential connection of the two questions. As socialists we need to welcome the present societal program of

Black Economic Empowerment. However, we need to insist that it should be subjected to the interests and the political economy of the majority of Black people the working class. Such a political economy privileges collective affirmation in the economy as against the present bias on individuals.

(12) Revolution and Reform

In 1995 the SACP adopted the strategic slogan; Socialism is the future build it now. This was a nodal point in seeking to address a question that had bedeviled the SACP since its inception in 1921. The question retains its significance: what is the relationship between reform and revolution. In the South African case there are many aspects of this question. In the anti apartheid struggle it was the relationship of the myriad struggles that the people were involved in and how these related to the revolutionary objective of dismantling the apartheid system. In the post apartheid situation the question of the relationship of many popular and working class biased reforms and the link with the struggle for socialism is key. Bearing in mind the impossibility of socialism under conditions of scarcity whether absolute or relative, the relationship of reform and revolution assumes particular characteristics in the underdeveloped world. It has in conjunction with socialist struggles in the developed centers had to be about the assertion of the political economy of the working class. By this we mean it should be about the assertion of measures that are both defensive and promotive of the interest of the working class. Such a political economy includes progressive labour laws, provision of basic needs, and many such measures that seek to limit and where possible to replace the market mechanism (profit motive) in the reproduction of the working class. In the developed world an argument can be advanced that such an accumulation of reforms can lead to a post capitalist society. Such a possibility cannot occur in the underdeveloped world. In the underdeveloped world revolutionary reforms have to proceed simultaneously with the logic of capital accumulation whether collective or in individual form. Despite the complexity of the terrain in the underdeveloped world revolutionary reforms have to be undertaken, and not postponed, so that the emerging socio economic formation is fundamentally informed by the rhythms of this political economy.

(13) Socialism and Gender

As earlier implied, socialism has to be the common front for radical subversives and for radical subversion. One of the areas that need radical subversion is the relationship between women and society and women and men. In the South

African case we have always referred to the triple oppression of South African black women. The majority of them were exploited as blacks as workers as well as in the domestic sphere as women. The demise of apartheid has significantly addressed the national dimension of this exploitation. However the class and gender based exploitation remains with us. Whilst class exploitation is universal and can only transform in the context of socialism, domestic exploitation of women must and should be addressed at the present time. This transformation is essentially cultural. It has to do with the cultural based rebuilding of the relation between men and women. This task must include legislation that protects women from physical abuse and from social discrimination. It also entails the reconstruction of the household political economy such that men and women interact in an egalitarian manner. In addressing the relationship between socialism and the struggle for gender equality we have to revisit our assertion that class and gender contradictions can be addressed simultaneously. National and gender contradictions can be addressed simultaneously but not class. The class contradiction between labour and capital can only be resolved in the context of the existence of a socialist society. A real socialist society can only be achieved in the context of a developed economic base. Thus whilst these contradictions coexist they cannot be addressed simultaneously. They obey different levels of determination.

(14) Socialism and Modernity

The industrial revolution brought with it change as the defining feature of its age- the age of modernity. Marx and Engels capture it well in the Communist Manifesto when they say, “all that is solid melts into air”. A socialism that will have a future will be one that locates itself centrally within the leitmotiv of modernity- change. In thesis 9 and in thesis 11, we speak of socialism as coexisting with the market mechanism which continues to be active in the realm of necessity even if it is subjected to the logic of socialism. If indeed this is the only logical way in which we can think of a feasible socialism, such a society cannot escape the challenges that accompany such dynamism. This dynamism is the expression amongst others of the division of labour which is the most efficient management of a modern economy and society. Socialists cannot wish away this dynamism in favour of a utopian search for stability. Instability is the price of the dynamism of living a modern life. The challenge for socialists will be to link this instability with the sustainable reproduction of society. This challenge of sustainable reproduction of society is more difficult with the disjuncture between the postfordist forms of capital and its inability to absorb

workers in the labour market. Socialists will have to find reforms that can on the one hand demand the sharing of wealth that post-fordist capital brings and on the other build on the embryonic forms or alternative reproduction that the working class is developing. In this context we will have to look more closely at such demands for a genuine basic income, the building of co-operatives, the rise of the informal sector, the demand for land and agrarian reform and the call for centers for reproduction and many others. The fundamental point is that a socialism with a future will not seek to simplify social life but will be based on embracing and being comfortable with diversity, fragmentation and change- the hallmarks of modernity.

(15) Globalization and the Struggle for Socialism

Globalization emerged as a response to the exhaustion of the fordist regime of accumulation. Fordism as a particular variant of capitalist accumulation was based on the congruence of mass production and mass consumption. It was a compromised capitalism in which there was a stake for every social category particularly the working class and the bourgeoisie. This stakeholder capitalism which consolidated in the developed centers after World War II became unstuck in the early 70s, due in particular to the decline of the conditions of profitability. Capital's response was to globalize- to go beyond the limits of the nation state both in terms of production sites as well as sites of exchange. The popular consciousness on globalization coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall- the collapse of societies that claimed to be socialist in Eastern Europe. There was a thesis which held sway in the liberation movement that, under the concept of the 'non capitalist path', socialist advance in the underdeveloped was privileged by the existence of the 'socialist bloc'. One of the central arguments of this thesis was that material socialist solidarity from the socialist bloc would attenuate the underdevelopment deficit of underdeveloped world.

Now that there is no socialist bloc in what way can we conceive of the struggle for socialism in the third world? Can you have socialism in the context of globalization? The reality of globalization has a number of implications for the underdeveloped world. On the one hand where there is an unintelligent integration to the logic of globalization, enclavity - the systematic exclusion of the third world can be reinforced to horrendous effect. On the other hand intelligent integration can always catalyze structural change, promote development, undermine enclavity, promote manufacturing and improve the efficiency of production. The struggle for socialism cannot escape the present

reality of globalization, because globalization is in the present the most appropriate form for the expression of the law of value (capitalism) As we have already argued, socialism proper is not the negation of the law of value, it is the socialization of the law of value, it is the subjection and the subordination of its logic to the logic of sociality and freedom. Socialism proper has to stand on its own foot not outside of but inside the logic of globalization.

(16) Forms of transition

Marx argued that the working class would in response to the contradictions of capitalism come together both in the form of combinations (trade unions) and working class political parties to oppose the logic of capital and to wrestle for control of the state. In this struggle the working class would seek to oppose the logic of capitalism and seek to replace it with the logic of the political economy of the working class. Concretely this alternative logic would principally be about taking over the commanding heights of the economy and vesting working class ownership and control over them. In Marx's view such a development would have been nothing more than the consolidation and the generalization of what he had referred to as the political economy of the working class. In particular Marx had singled out two initiatives as exemplifying the political economy of the working class. These were legislation that sought to protect workers from the extremes of capitalist exploitation as well as the building of co-operatives. So for him generalized ownership of the means of production was the correct crystallization of this logic.

It is our view that the concept of political economy of the working class has to be embraced and extended. In the specific historical context of South Africa where the question of transition to socialism cannot be evaded, it becomes critical for us to identify those measures that can reinforce the momentum towards socialism. As earlier argued there are quite a number of interventions whose overall logic would if implemented lay the foundation for a socialist oriented path in our society. These would include the strengthening of a socialized state sector. A state sector that operates in the interests of and lends itself to the actual control of the working class and popular classes. The second element of a socialist transition is the building and broadening of a cooperative sector whose role would be to tilt the economic balance of forces in a radical direction. The third form of the socialist transition would involve the elaboration of an economics of time. The fact that present capitalism is based on capitalist intensity and expunges the working class from world of work. Capital intensity

reduces necessary labour time in the production of commodities. This development as the generalized organization of modern global capitalism raises the issue of the reduction of the working week. This problem is relatively easier to resolve in the developed world in the context of the levels of wealth. The economics of time include in the developed world the demand for a basic income and the shortening of the working week. What are the implications of the economics of time in the underdeveloped world? It is our view that though economics of time can not be the overall basis of the re-organization of the economies of the underdeveloped world it can be an important element in considering the way forward.

The fourth element of a transition towards socialism is the reduction of the role of dominant capital in the reproduction of labour. The idea of the reproduction of labour without recourse to dominant capital may appear to be contradictory to people living under capitalism. However in the context of the 'end of work' there is an ongoing search for new ways of social reproduction of the working classes. The Maoist moment, with regard both to the iron rice bowl, and the promotion of local substitution strategy as a semi industrial response at the behest of popular classes needs to be relooked at. More recently in the United States and in Europe there is a movement for high tech self providing. In the third world there is the movement for what is referred to as the solidarity economy. The various projects of the Independent Development Trust as well as many of the poverty eradication projects of the democratic government all operate with this principle. The challenge is for the Left to study these experiences draw lessons and where appropriate generalize them.

In a brilliant essay originally written in 1968, "Gramsci and the concept of civil society", Noberto Bobbio locates an important difference between Marx and Gramsci on the concept of civil society. Marx seems to have been loyal to a particular version of the concept's German origin where civil society is bourgeoisie society. For Marx bourgeoisie society meant actually a society dominated by the bourgeoisie. It was that space in society in which the workers were exploited and oppressed. It was an arena of struggle. It was the infrastructure of the society, its base. Whilst Gramsci retained the struggle dimension of the concept, civil society was essentially super-structural. It was an arena in which ideas, values and concepts were contested and formed. For him it was a space of creation to elaborate perspectives and practices that have emancipatory possibilities. However for Gramsci it was not only an ideological terrain but a practical space in which transformative practices such as the promotion of

cooperation, working class councils and other transformative practices could be pursued. Gramsci's concept of civil society must be revisited today as we explore pathways to a post capitalist civilization. Much as the transition to a post capitalist society is likely to be long, we cannot postpone the challenge of thinking about and working towards it. It is our view that such transitions will include various concrete forms whose essential features will be the varied expression of the political economy of the working class.

In this regard we think that there is a role for the state. Both through its legislative power it could protect the rights of worker and limit the power of capital. Secondly the state can develop institutions that can assist in the development of an alternative sector such as banks for the poor, promoting popular based land and agrarian transformative projects etc. We will have to scale up the enterprises that operate on an alternative political economy- such as cooperatives. Progressive forces should work together to ensure that a radical front for radical development is developed- with an emphasis on reconstructive politics. Some of this work can derive from civil society. This does not mean that the state cannot play a role in some of these initiatives. Working together we should ensure that we establish centers for self-production as well. The SACP in the Gauteng province is presently working with Department of Agriculture Conservation and Land (DACEL) to establish 4000 vegetable gardens in Gauteng which will serve to decommodify food provision. DACEL is also keen to work with us on embryonic center that can lay the basis for self production beyond agriculture. What will have to be looked at is the relationship of the demand for a Basic Income Grant and the promotion of centers for self production. It is our view that these measures will go a long way to advancing the move towards a post capitalist society.

(17) Rethinking Politics - Kerala and Porto Alegre

In an earlier thesis we make the point about the crisis of governance and the crisis of politics in general. Historical Marxism has always been aware of the limitation of the state form that has evolved in the service of capitalism. Marxists have since the Paris commune insisted that the state has to be subordinated to the logic of the people. This was also Lenin's thesis in the State and Revolution, as well as in the April Thesis. The essential feature of such a state was that it was popular as well as being controlled by the people. Whilst this essential thesis was correct, its historical limitation was the fact that it was counter posed to the representative democratic form. Presently there are

attempts at positively relating the two forms. The popular budgeting initiatives in Kerala and in Brazil's Porto Alegre are pointers to a new politics that deliberately locates the initiative of governance amongst the people. We in South Africa have been trying to learn from this experience. The Integrated Development Plans are our own attempts at giving popular dimension to the budgeting process in our country. This initiative is still at an early stage, and presently suffers from bureaucratization as well as being driven by consultants. In 2003 the SACP in Gauteng has sought to focus on these issues and is pro actively seeking to influence local government in the province to adapt and adopt the progressive measures as pioneered by the Indian and Brazilian comrades. More fundamentally we are surfacing a debate on the necessary relationship between the IDPs and the provincial and national budgeting process.

(18) Ecology and the challenge of accumulation

A 21st century socialist project serious about its future can no longer proceed without paying particular attention to the sustainability of the biosphere- the precondition for everything we aspire for. We have already made the point that Marx's concept of socialism was based on a highly developed industrial civilization. It is now an acknowledged fact that the past 200 years of industrial civilization are threatening to destroy the planet's ecosystem. The carbon that has been emitted in these past centuries has led to desertification, and serious climate change, as well as threatening to exhaust important energy sources. The dilemma that ecological concerns have on the socialist project relates to Marx's important insight that only an industrial society can lay the foundations for socialism. Is it possible to have an industrial society with out ecological destruction? Can socialists envisage a modernization project that does not harm the environment and simultaneously give everyone a comfortable life?

(19) Developmental State

One of the fundamental developments of the late twentieth century has been the successful rise of the developmental state in the peripheries of the world system. The developmental state developed later but coexisted for some time with the national democratic state of the third world 'socialist' oriented states. Both states had a democratic deficit (more pronounced in the national democracies), but the developmental state succeeded in solving the question of the appropriate method for the accumulation of the forces of production. In the second world

(i.e. the Eastern Bloc) the economies crashed before this question could be solved and with the crash the whole experiment of 'socialism'. In the third world, particularly in Vietnam and in China, the national democratic state has evolved into a developmental state, and seems to be succeeding in raising both the level of the forces of production as well as the welfare of the people. Cuba is coming into the fray but the economy remains at the helm of a dominating state sector with out significant participation of the people in ways that they choose.

The question to be asked is what is the distinction between a developmental state and a national democratic state- historically? National democratic states predominantly defined themselves in terms of the political economic agendas that informed them-whose essential character was popular and a measure of 'socialist orientation'. Developmental states were bourgeoisie but with strong bonarpatist characteristics. Though capitalist oriented, the state not only exhibited but acted with some measure of autonomy. This autonomy made it possible for the state to, amongst other things, control finance capital, to be able to identify leading sectors in the economy to which most investments had to be channeled as well as creative and effective control of fiscal and monetary policy. It was the same power that it used to drive a popular land and agrarian program.

The developmental state evolved not as a social policy state in the urban areas, but as a state championing industrial policy. Social policy outcomes, which have emerged were not the prior concerns of these governments, but intended as positive outcomes. Before addressing social policy these states addressed accumulation- wealth creation. The developmental states governed markets. The critical question was the nature of that governance. It was governance that did not seek to undermine markets, but to govern them for their own good. These states were not afraid to create many capitalists or even conglomerates- as long as that process was linked to transformation of the structure of these economies from being rural based to industrial economies. The issue was to end enclavity- i.e. the dependence on competitiveness that is based on primary products to one that is based on the competitiveness of manufactures. As earlier eluded China and to some degree Vietnam are pursuing a unique synthesis between a national democratic state and a developmental state. They have sought to bring their historical fidelity to working class and popular classes into a new era in which such a class commitment has to relate to the creation of middle class and bourgeoisie with the objective of transforming the structure of their economies.

Are there any lessons in this strategy for South Africa? A question in the same

vein is: what is the character of our state- Is it bourgeois, national democratic, or developmental? Thirteen year into our democracy the ANC is more willing to raise these questions as exemplified by it's the government's Asgisa program, the unveiling of the government's industrial policy at the June policy conference and policy outcomes of the Polokwane conference. As we go ahead it is imperative for the movement to be clearer on the detail of its developmental state claims. Is there space in our industrial policy for import substitution as Trevor Bell argued in the early to mid 1990s? Can we call ourselves a developmental state when we still import a substantial amount of the commodities that we use? Are we clear as to what should be the ideal balance between our imports and our exports? Should we remain at ease with the fact that our most dependable exports remain unprocessed commodities? What will it take in terms of cost and capability to ensure that we further deepen the contribution of manufactures to our exports? More fundamentally we have to address the issue of the necessity to build a small and medium sector in the entire economy with particular competence in the light industry which is a necessary response to the enclave character of the economy with all its attendant large scale and capital intensive biases.

Another critical dimension our industrial policy will have to address is the implication of our mineral endowment to the industrial challenges facing the country. As it is, our mineral wealth has proscribed the potential of our industrialization and limited it to the 'mineral energy complex' catalyzing such industries which are functional to the complex. Presently both the price we pay for steel and synthetic oil is globally set even though we have a comparative advantage in both of these. The demand therefore for a substantial state presence in the minerals sector makes economic and ethical sense. South Africa has to consider both owning a significant percentage, a minimum of 25% on all mines, with out forfeiting taxation as well establishing a mining development corporation, to promote a state led program of prospecting and investment in the industry. Such a public presence in mining would ensure that our mining resource act as stimulant to industrialization rather than the fetter that they are today. Another related tool of industrial policy is trade policy. Whilst the World Trade Organization limits the use of trade instruments there is a scope for maneuvering. We cannot completely develop our import substitution capacity with out the use of some tariff instruments. All these measures can fundamentally drive the process of structural change and ensure that the country embarks on a sustainable path of development creating both the foundation and the momentum for socialist oriented development.

(20) Socialism and the Land and Agrarian question

Since the advent of democratic rule in 1994 only 8% of the land has been added to the 13% of the land that remained with the historically oppressed people. So in essence only 21% percent of the land is in the hands of 75% percent of the population. With out doubt this is untenable. It goes against the solution of the national question, but more importantly it flies against the historical experience of the successful national democratic revolutions as well as the developmental states of the 20th century. It is important to emphasize that worker peasant alliance was at the heart and the bedrock of both the Russian, Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions. Without the surplus from the peasantry the Russian and Chinese industrialization would have been unthinkable. The problem with the South African revolution which is a function of its urban bias has been a pronounced lack of appreciation of the centrality of the agrarian question. Even when we talk of the developmental state we seem not to be aware of the critical role that agrarian reform can play in absorbing surplus labour which is the common feature of underdeveloped societies.

It is a fact that within the context of a negotiated settlement a classical misappropriation of the landlords was not on the cards. This however does not justify the timidness that has undergirded our approach to this question. The Congress movement in its entirety has not completely opened up this question. We need in particular to ask the following questions? What is the agrarian question in South Africa in the context of a post negotiation society? What is the class content of the agrarian question? In other words within the varied classes of the historically oppressed in the country side, which classes or combination of classes should the congress movement seek to represent. What should be the tilt in such a front of forces and why should it be? This methodology should also be employed in our relationship with the established farming sector. We need to unpack the character of the established sector. What is the extent of the presence of transnational, monopoly capital in agriculture? What is the character of the presence of medium and small scale capitalist sector? What are the implications of the fact that 40% of the established agricultural sector make about 3 to 400 00 rands a year and are in essence part of the middle class? In essence the question that we have not addressed is what would a transformed agrarian sector look like in South Africa?

Presently with all the inequities of the land question in South Africa, the country does have food security. Is it possible for the movement to design a strategy in

which the objective of food security could be sustained whilst the objective of thorough going transformation is being pursued? Mark Wells an industrial engineer argues that another 'countryside is possible' if a popular based agrarian program is pursued within the context of 'zero waste agricultural principles'. Zero waste agriculture is "the optimal use of nature, in the form of plants, animals, bacteria, fungi and algae, to produce biodiversity-food, energy and nutrients in a synergistic integrate cycle of profit making processes where the waste of each process becomes the feedstock for another process". He argues much transformation could occur if the government would realize the target of transferring 30% of commercial land to the historically oppressed by 2014. This would add 25 million hectares to the 13 million hectares that Blacks had since the apartheid years which were in the so called homelands. If this is divided into five hectares for each family it would give 8 million families land stewardship, which could translate itself into 16 million jobs in zero waste agriculture on small family owned farms. According to him a typical kraal with owning 5 hectares of land with 5 cattle, six sheep, 7 goats and 2 pigs producing a complex of products partly powered by methane from animal waste would end up producing a profit to the value of R182 600, 00 a year. This would indeed solve the land question from the point of view indeed of the 21st century, the knowledge century!!! Thus without completely solving the land question as 59% of the land would still be in White hands (who are 25% of the population) revolutionary transformation is possible in our country side and indeed to most of the African continent. However for such revolutionary possibilities to be realized it is indeed important to implement the foundational framework that was adopted by the ANC in its 52nd National conference in Polokwane. That resolution is comprehensive in its scope and is also sensitive to detail. It calls amongst other for a review of policy, addressing the infrastructural backlogs of the rural areas as well as developing the capacity of the state to speed up rural and agrarian transformation. However what remains and what will have to arrest our attention in the period ahead is fundamentally asking the question, what is our idea of a transformed countryside?

(21) Socialism, Enclave Economy and Culture

The socialism that we seek to build in South Africa will have to engage with the historical experience of undoing the enclave character of our economy i.e. an economy characterized by primary production with limited forward and backward linkages. The strategy of a three tendencies political economy that we have already referred to can effectively respond to the enclave character of our

economy. There is however another side to enclavity. Our enclavity was historically based on a particular political economic geography- the reserve question. How should a socialist strategy deal with the reserve legacy? Whilst the reserve has come to represent a concentration of poverty, they are the repositories of a world that was once ours. They are, even if distorted, the archives of a way of life that is linked to a pre-colonial life. Furthermore the property relations of the reserves remain to this day proto socialist. Every one has a right to access the means of production. A socialist strategy today will have to look at the excavation of the cultural meaning of the reserves, seek to pose the land and agrarian question anew. Such an agrarian question can not and should not only be about a land based strategy. It should also include small scale industrial production- a real renaissance for our rural areas. Such a renaissance could give a solid base for the excavation of the pre-colonial civilization, which could be a major contribution to the challenge of building an African nation in the Southern most tip of the continent.

REFLECTIONS

Vishwas Satgar

The Age of Barbarism

Introduction

At a common sense level, in every day life, the crisis of global capitalism has shattered hope and has engendered a debilitating despair and uncertainty. When workers lose their jobs, when peasants are dispossessed of their land and when food prices go up bringing hunger into the lives of millions, the brutality and violence of capitalism looms large. Moreover, when ruling classes argue that a one or two degree change in planetary temperatures will mean 'adaptation', the reality is that these shifts in climatic conditions will be felt disproportionately by the working class and the poor. For many it would seem humanity is trapped and our circumstances cannot be changed.

However, as pointed out in the introduction to this book immanent within the crisis of global capitalism are various historical possibilities. This requires a recognition that history is open, given the objective weaknesses and limits of global capitalism, and given that historical outcomes can be shaped if we choose to struggle. The global power structures of capitalism have been made by social forces and can be remade to support a new way of existing. Global capitalism is not a progressive force for the development of humanity and a non-destructive relationship with nature. This is confirmed by its ongoing destruction of the conditions that sustain life on earth. It is an enemy of humanity and nature. In this context a failure to engage in conscious political action for an alternative is tantamount to complicity in the perpetuation of this irrational system of endless accumulation (that benefits a minority) and our self destruction.

The poetic footprints I have shared, as part of this book, give glimpses into the destructiveness of capitalism, its barbarism, but also an appreciation and respect for the indomitable human spirit. Such a spirit is reflected in the courage of the left to stand up and fight against this barbarism in the twentieth century. Many like Luxemburg, Gramsci, E.M.S. Namboodiripad (the first elected Communist Chief Minister in 1950s India, Kerala) and Allende are examples from the left who have struggled to keep history open. They chose not to surrender to capitalism but neither to 'revolutionary orthodoxy'. As we try to use the contradictions of global capitalism to find exits and departure points for a democratic

eco-socialist future, we need to recognise that the crucial lesson of 20th Century socialism, in my view, is that barbarism cannot be used to fight barbarism.

This means we have to think much more deeply about means and ends in the context of transformative struggle. The Marxist tradition has not dealt with the question of means and ends adequately. In most instances, all means justify the 'scientifically defined ends'. This is one kind of extreme. The other kind of unthinking Marxism is one in which certain strategies and tactics have been frozen as part of a 'successful revolutionary canon' and therefore these tried and tested methods, under all historical circumstances, must prevail. Today, the context of global capitalist crisis provides fertile ground for reactionary ideologies to come to the fore, including doctrinaire left ideologies. The resurgence of 'revolutionary orthodoxies and dogmas' such as neo-Stalinist populism poses as much of a threat to progressive change as does global capitalism. This is the crux of the reflections I would like to share.

US Supremacy and Barbarism

It was Rosa Luxemburg who posed the question socialism or barbarism? In the context of the world we live in today, of rampant global capitalism, the barbarism of this system is experienced differently from Rosa Luxemburg's time. We are in a civilisation that does not value the importance of human life, it is actually anti-human, and it does not value our relationship with the natural environment. Put differently, the logic of endless accumulation and global expansion is not merely about polarisation or exploitation but fundamentally about physical destruction. This is the characteristic feature of contemporary global capitalism and what defines its barbarism. This destruction is happening on a global scale. Central to driving the destruction of the world we are in is US supremacy. After the cold war US supremacy has been unrivalled on the planet even with the emergence of China as an important global economic player.

To understand the logic of destruction inherent in contemporary global capitalism we have to understand how US supremacy has engendered the conditions for this to prevail. There are three crucial ways in which US supremacy has prevailed over the world. The first is through the globalisation of a model of neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism is a global accumulation strategy of transnational capital and a worldview about the primacy of market-led development. The primary objectives of neoliberalism are to ensure US supremacy in the world and ensure the realisation of the interests of transnational capital. This

process of globalising a neoliberal model of capitalism began in the 1980s and was driven by the rise of finance capital. Concomitantly a process of global restructuring has ensued, which has wrenched open economies and displaced any kind of alternative political economy. This was spurred on by the end of the cold war and in the 21st century through neoliberal restructuring we have a world that is being recreated in the image of the US and organised around the interests of transnational capital. The flip side of this market-led restructuring process are fundamental consequences for the reproduction of societies. Actually, most societies that have been forced to open their economies and integrate into global capitalism have lost a great deal of policy autonomy and control over national economic decision-making.

In this context food security has been compromised, de-industrialisation has been taking place with entire sectors disappearing and financial markets have become volatile. Through market-led development, crashing and collapsing national economies have become a feature of global capitalism over the past three decades. In this sense the global crisis of capitalism did not begin with the collapse of the sub-prime housing market in the US but has actually been ongoing and an inherent feature of the neoliberal restructuring of societies in the periphery of capitalism. This has had crushing consequences for workers and the poor. Global growth has been encouraged without including the vast majority on this planet. We have become truly a 'planet of slums' alongside enclaves of extreme concentrations of wealth. Moreover, globalised production structures have broken the link with reproduction. Wage based employment as the means to ensure survival and the reproduction of households has become extremely difficult. Actually with the global economic crisis job losses are deepening the horrors and destruction of everyday life.

The second way in which US supremacy is creating the conditions for the destruction of our world is through militarism. Militarism has been a key element of US foreign policy especially since the Spanish American civil war. However, with the end of the cold war US expansionism through the projection of military power did not abate. The expected demilitarisation and peace dividend did not materialise. The first invasion of Iraq in 1991 was a crucial show of military power in a region with crucial geopolitical importance. Later through NATO the US also projected its power in Yugoslavia and began developing a military presence in Eastern Europe. However, the barbarism of US violence is not only related to its expansionism but also with how it unleashes war. First, the cost of invading Iraq and Afghanistan after 9/11 is

conservatively estimated by the Congressional Research Service as being \$942 billion. Other economists place the costs at over \$3 trillion. Whether the higher or lower figure is accepted, what is irrational about all this is that these large sums of money are being spent in the context of massive economic fall out both in the US and in the global political economy. While this massive military expenditure might be a part of the strategy for economic recovery, it still suggests war is more important than the over five million American's that have lost their jobs in the economic crisis. The US stimulus package (about \$700 billion) is not as large as the cost of financing these wars. In short war and military spending is both at the expense of American workers and citizens, but also at the expense of the poor countries being destroyed by US military power. The second aspect of how the US wages war is not through evidence and legal rights. We have entered the age of a new kind of warfare in which war is akin to 'witch hunts'. War is merely about the exercise of power; might is right. This comes through with regard to the reasons given for invading Iraq. The argument that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction has been proven to be false. Moreover, the new kind of drone warfare orchestrated through remote controlled airplanes blasts and kills more than suspected terrorists. It kills innocent people that might be in the vicinity of a so-called target. This kind of techno killing also reflects in a stark way the anti-human side of capitalism's contemporary barbarism. Finally the use of torture has added to the almost feudal character of how the US wages war.

The third way in which US supremacy creates the conditions for the logic of destruction is through its opposition to being part of addressing the ecological crisis facing global capitalism. The US accounts for a quarter of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. It has the highest per capita emission levels of carbon dioxide per person on the planet. Following in a close second are the rest of the industrialised countries (or the G7). Essentially 684 million people and their patterns of production and consumption are driving global warming, threatening the biosphere and the future of the planet. The climate change science that we have in the world shows this and confirms that human activity is the cause of global warming. Despite this evidence the US government refused to sign the first ever legal instrument, the Kyoto Protocol, that provided for 'legally binding' restrictions in greenhouse gas emissions of 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels, by 2008-2012, for all industrialised countries. The US was meant to bring down its green house gas emission levels to 8 percent. The irony of this US reluctance is that the Kyoto protocol was merely a symbolic gesture. In itself it fell far short of a more serious and aggressive approach to address climate change.

Stalinism Through the Eyes of William Kentridge

With global capitalism in crisis the need for a renewed socialism to come to the fore as an alternative is critical. However, more likely in some places is a resurgence of 'revolutionary orthodoxies and dogmas'. This derives from the Marxism that dominated the imagination of the 20th century and emerged out of the Russian Revolution. It was canonised by Stalin and exported to the world as 'Marxism-Leninism'. For Rosa Luxemburg, a supporter of the Bolsheviks led by Lenin, the turn to terror and undemocratic means after the capture of power in revolutionary Russia, sowed the seeds of destruction. Her argument that a virtue was made of necessity proved to be correct. Moreover, her perspective on revolutionary politics privileged the need to widen the democratic space and ensure conditions were created for mass self organising and mass power from below. Instead, and as she observed, the 'revolutionary violence' and authoritarianism that was utilised early on became the rule and not the exception. Karl Kautsky, the leading ideologue of the German Social Democrats, also critiqued the Bolshevik turn to terror but went further to argue that the conditions in Russia did not provide for a successful advance to socialism. In his view Russia was a backward country and therefore socialism could not be achieved. In the main he problematised ends, in this case a socialist project, by focusing on objective conditions. Both these arguments provide us with important ways of thinking about the means and ends challenge facing Marxist politics.

However, another way of thinking about means and ends relates to consequences. The choices made by the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and later by Stalin had fundamental consequences for their revolution. For Stalin's centrally planned socialism the justifications for this seem to derive from three Marxist-Leninist arguments or ways of thinking about social change. The first relates to harnessing the achievements of capitalism as the basis of socialism. In many ways the Soviet mass fordist factory was part of this experiment. Big factories were symbols of building on the best of capitalism. It reflected the forward march of the forces of production. At the same time, Stalin's choices had destructive ecological consequences. Not only did the great industrial leap forward obscure the ecological aspects in Marx's Marxism but it also suppressed an ecological dimension to Soviet socialism. Such a dimension expressed itself through the golden years of the Soviet Revolution. In the early to mid 1920s there was a strong environmental movement. It was influenced by the work of Bogdanov and taken up in policy terms by Lunacharsky and Bukharin. Moreover, many conservation reserves were set up from 1919 and were even

strongly supported by Lenin. However, by 1929 the rise of the environmental movement was stopped in its tracks by Stalin. He basically suppressed any pre-occupations with the environment and launched his plan for forced march industrialization. Stalin's industrialization was a disaster for the environment and produced catastrophic consequences for the resource base of the Soviet economy. To this extent the Green critique of actually existing socialism is correct except that its target should be Stalinist socialism and not socialism in general. This ecological critique is one of the many aspects absent in Slovo's disengagement from the Soviet Union.

The second Marxist-Leninist argument justifying Stalin's centrally planned socialism derives from the scientism of Soviet Marxism (also present in Second International Marxism). This suggested that Marxism-Leninism has a superior understanding of how society was changing. The 'iron laws' of history were clear on where society should end up even if it meant wiping out large parts of the peasantry through forced collectivisation of agriculture. The violence that transformed the class structures of rural Russia, under Stalin, was extremely brutal. Hunger, starvation on a mass scale and thousands of executions ensured the 'scientific certainties' of a classless society prevailed through collectivised agriculture. The primitive accumulation and extraction of surplus from the peasantry laid the basis for what many, we have interviewed, refer to as 'state capitalism', 'bureaucratic state-led development' and so on. A third Marxist-Leninist argument advocated by Stalinism for the choices it made was anchored in the superiority of the knowledge that resided in the vanguard. The vanguard understood the past and the future. The vanguard had the monopoly of the 'class perspective'. In practice this monopoly resided with Stalin and the power structures he built up to ensure his reign of terror.

The madness of this and its tragic consequences, in my view, is best captured by William Kentridge, one of South Africa's great artists, who has combined his painting, film-making and training in theatre, to produce some of the most creative work we are seeing in the world today. In one of his most recent opera productions he explores the tragedy of the Russian Revolution through the device of absurdity. He places 'comrade nose' (a fictional character derived from a short story written by Gogol) inside Stalin's crazy world and shows how the Bolshevik cream 'lost their noses'. In other words, he shows how those who dared to question the monopoly of truth that resided in the party, and ultimately Stalin, were erased from history. He has a powerful scene in his opera in which Bukharin is defending his life in the Central Committee. Kentridge takes

directly from the minutes of Stalin's Central Committee (recorded in its original to include reference to laughter) to show how inhumanity presented itself as revolutionary, how barbarism worked inside Stalin's party.

Bukharin:

The whole tragedy of my situation lies in this, that this Piatakov and others like him so poisoned the atmosphere, such an atmosphere arose that no one believes human feelings - not emotions, no the impulses of the heart, not tears. (Laughter) Many manifestations of human feeling, which had represented a form of proof - and there was nothing shameful in this - have today lost their validity and force.

Bukharin:

Comrades, I implore you not to interrupt me, because it is difficult for me, it is simply physically hard for me to speak. I will answer any question posed to me, but please do not interrupt me just now. I won't shoot myself, because then people will say I killed myself so as to harm the Party. But if I die, as it were, from an illness, then what will you lose by it? (Laughter.) Please permit me to finish and explain this whole business to the best of my ability.

Kaganovich:

You are not very good at explaining it - that's the whole point.

Bukharin:

Whether I explain it well or poorly, I am speaking sincerely, my thoughts are sincere.

Kaganovich:

Not every act of sincerity is correct.

Bukharin:

In any case, I am speaking sincerely.

Molotov:

And we to are criticising you sincerely. (Laughter: Uproar in the room.)

Voroshilov:

You scoundrel! Keep your trap shut! How vile! How dare you speak like that!

Bukharin:

But you must understand - it's very hard for me to die.

Stalin:

And it's easy for us to go on living?! (Noise in the room, prolonged laughter.)

The brutal and violent consequences of particular means are another way of thinking critically about the appropriate means to achieve socialism. Such an argument assists in recognising that some means contain within them consequences that take away from socialism; actually it reproduces what we should be against. Finally, another way of grappling with the challenge of means and ends, and engendering a self aware practice and understanding of tactics is through qualifying the means used. This means there are principles that come before our actions and should guide them. In this regard we can draw from the contribution made by Victor Serge, a Russian anarchist, who joined the Bolsheviks and later became part of the Left Opposition that was critical of Stalin and the increasing bureaucratisation of the Russian revolution. It would seem he was the first to describe the Soviet Regime as 'Totalitarian' and he also compared Stalin's regime to the Thermidorian reaction that followed the French Revolution. Serge was expelled from the Communist Party in 1928. In the 1930s he spent a few years in a Gulag and eventually through international pressure the Stalinist regime was forced to let him leave the country. From his autobiography *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* he has this to say about qualifying the means to achieve particular ends:

- I. *Defence of man. Respect for man. Man must be given his rights, his security, his value. Without these, there is no Socialism. Without these, all is false, bankrupt and spoiled. I mean: man whoever he is, be he the meanest of men - 'class enemy', son or grandson of a bourgeois, I do not care. It must never be forgotten that a human being is a human being. Every day, everywhere, before my very eyes this is being forgotten and it is the most revolting and anti-Socialist thing that could happen...*
- II. *Defence of truth. Man and the masses have a right to the truth. I will not consent either to the systematic falsification of history or to the suppression of all serious news from the Press (which is confined to a purely agitational role). I hold truth to be a precondition of intellectual and moral health. To speak the truth is to speak of honesty. Both are the right of men.*
- III. *Defence of thought... I hold that Socialism cannot develop in the intellectual sense except by the rivalry, scrutiny and struggle of ideas; that we should fear not error, which is mended in time by life itself, but rather stagnation and reaction; that respect for man implies his right to know everything and his freedom to think.*

The Rise of Neo-Stalinist Populism in South Africa

The SACP was a child of both the Russian Revolution and the South African struggle. It was born in 1921 and fought for decades for a democratic South Africa. It was the first non-racial political organisation in the country. While it has had to navigate its relationship with the Soviet Union, including the Sovietisation of its own Marxist outlook during the greater part of the 20th Century, it was a party that mediated this through its moorings in the South African struggle for national liberation and socialism. In this struggle the working class in South Africa through its practices, struggles and ideological battles with the racist regime, were able to ensure a profound democratic impulse prevailed. An African worker excluded from having the franchise wanted the right to vote in the society of his/her birth and wanted to determine who the political leadership of South Africa should be (which also partly explains the high voter turn outs we still have in our democracy). Such a worker wanted the democratic means to organise, build mass movements, debate and influence the content of government policy even from the factory floor. Traditions of 'worker control' and 'peoples power' were central to this home grown South African Marxism. In many ways the abstractions of a Sovietised Marxism-Leninism such as the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat', 'one party state' had to come to terms with this powerful democratic impulse and participatory logic in the South African struggle.

With the collapse of Eastern Europe the SACP more than most left political organisations in the world had fertile conditions to innovate and renew Marxist socialism. It had appropriate raw materials (indigenous Marxist impulses) to de-stalinise and contribute to the renewal of socialism in the 21st Century. It had the opportunity to elaborate on 'Our Marxism' in theory and practice. This process was inaugurated by Joe Slovo through his pamphlet *Has Socialism Failed?* but this found shallow roots inside the organisation. While important programmatic themes emerged inside the SACP during the 1990s that reflected a degree of rethinking and socialist renewal this was short lived. The possibilities of a new conception of socialism and some of its themes are documented in a book entitled: *Roots of Participatory Democracy - Democratic Communists in Kerala, India and South Africa*. My generation was part of this process and contributed to this renewal both theoretically and practically. So, what happened? Why was socialist renewal eclipsed inside the SACP? Why was socialist renewal replaced with neo-stalinist populism?

In my view there are four crucial factors. First, the leadership that emerged at the helm of the SACP since 1998 did not believe in the project of socialist renewal. It preferred dogmatic and orthodox certainties but tolerated both the theoretical and programmatic shifts taking place around renewal. Moreover, as a mass party increasingly populated with various currents and tendencies it was difficult for them to ideologically straight jacket the organisation. However, this has happened gradually and over time. Such that today political education is taken straight from the classic texts published by Progress Publishers. A Stalinised Marxism-Leninism is back and is the new gospel. These days with low production costs and super exploitation of the workers in China, the sacred texts come to South Africa with the approval of the Chinese Communist Party.

The second factor that has rolled back the renewal of socialism in the SACP, is a pre-occupation with a statist conception of socialism. This is partly a knee jerk response to neoliberalism's attack on the state and therefore 'statism', the opposite has to be defended. Again there is a failure to devise strategy by looking at the actual conditions underpinning the state and changing its form. Moreover, the rise of China has engendered a new enthusiasm for state-led development. The Chinese 'super-power' and developmental state model holds a powerful attraction. Again there is no critical appreciation of what the underlying dynamics of Chinese accumulation are. Aspects of China are selectively appropriated to support the case for a South African development state. One of the recent proposals to emerge from the SACP leadership called for a two-tier super-cabinet with a strong centralising and commandist structure for governance. Feeding into state centric conceptions inside the SACP has been a fixation amongst some in the trade union movement for neo-corporatist macro-policy making. Such a conception derives from an unreconstructed social democratic politics that believes elite deals at the apex of society can impact on redistribution and provide a social wage for workers. In short, a state capitalism has emerged as the project of the SACP under a neo-Stalinist leadership.

This relates to a third factor. Such a state capitalism (but dressed up in the rhetoric of socialism) is presented as an alternative to the neoliberalism of the Mbeki era. Under Thabo Mbeki South Africa experienced uninterrupted neoliberalisation, which began in the apartheid era. Mbeki's faction globalised the South African economy ensuring monopoly capital moves off-shore while making concessions to deracialise the commanding heights through Black Economic Empowerment. Mbeki, consciously fostered a new transnational fraction of the South African ruling class and encouraged rapid class formation

through the state. All of this constituted a 'passive revolution'. A deracialising and globalising capitalism replaced radical transformation as the project for a post-apartheid South Africa. Global capitalism was understood as the path to emancipation and alternatives to capitalism were marginalised. In this process concessions were made to the working class to ensure some of their interests were realised through Mbeki's passive revolution. This included labour market reform, increasing social expenditures and empowerment deals for union investment companies.

Many of us on the left were marginalised, humiliated and contained in this process. These tactics were not only utilised at a national level but confronted us at various levels. Inside the SACP this manifested as an aggressive factionalism. Mbeki's forces contested and attempted to even contain the SACP from within. The response from the rank and file in the SACP were to push for the SACP to consider its own political future and secure this through marrying direct electoral contestation to socialist renewal. Such a strategic option had various permutations and possibilities and even included the possibility of the SACP renovating itself into a new left party aligned to a new bloc of left forces. Instead of ensuring and supporting a serious strategic debate on the question of state power, the dominant neo-Stalinist faction or the Nzimande/Cronin faction chose to manipulate and contain it. I was a provincial secretary at the time when at a special Durban conference (about four or five years ago) convened to discuss this question we were called into a 'backroom' and told unambiguously by the SACP leadership led by the Nzimande/Cronin faction that the SACP was not going to take this question forward and resolve decisively on it. In short, the leadership was not interested in the rank and file and from behind their backs was going to control this process. Instead of allowing the unemployed and working class base to determine the outcome at this conference, a vague and ambiguous resolution was passed which tried to placate the rank and file while the bureaucratic apparatus recaptured ground. This revealed that the state capitalist project of the Blade /Cronin faction had more in common with the BEE elites inside the ANC, the union investment companies and the personal interests of those in the SACP leadership who were in parliament and government positions benefiting from the largesse of the ANC.

The Nzimande/Cronin faction were clearly on a path to sell out the working class. This led to the fourth factor that fostered the rise of neo-Stalinist populism. Instead, of choosing the strategic option of entering the political system and realigning political forces to secure a future for the socialist project, this faction

chose to feed into the divisions inside the ANC and gain an ascendancy. The SACP became a means to advance state capitalism and the personal interests of this faction. In this regard Mbeki's hubris and disconnection from the base played into their hands. The moment Mbeki fired the deputy President of the country because of his alleged corrupt involvement in the arms deal, Jacob Zuma became the trump card for the Nzimande/Cronin faction to settle scores with Mbeki but also pave the way for their project. Under the leadership of the Nzimande/Cronin faction the SACP became the main champion of Jacob Zuma's innocence. A host of means were utilised to close ranks around the new hero of the working class: Jacob Zuma was a 'victim of a conspiracy', the real enemy of the revolution was the '1996 class project' (which translates into the Mbeki faction), Zulu nationalism became a big part of discourse in the SACP during Zuma's rape trial, the courts were bourgeois, racism came to the fore against some of us who were non-African etc. A madness raged inside the SACP as this faction closed ranks and lined up behind hero Zuma. Those of us who tried to engage in a rational politics and focus the party on its programmatic commitments to the workers and the poor were dealt with viciously and harshly. The SACP was no longer about socialism, but had raised the flag of neo-stalinist populism. A similar intolerance gripped the unions. Zuma became the Trojan horse for the 'ANC path to socialism'. A neo-Stalinist populism was unleashed on the ANC-led alliance and the country by the Nzimande/Cronin faction. Giving the working class new strategic options to advance a renewed socialist project and the means to build their capacity to lead genuine transformation from below was abandoned.

By 2007 Mbeki experienced a humiliating defeat at the Polokwane conference of the ANC and Jacob Zuma was installed as President of the ANC. This was hailed as a victory for democracy. However, in the course of 2008 an unrelenting attack was launched on the young institutions of our democracy. Our courts were maligned and judges were declared counter-revolutionary from the streets, as Zuma's legal team tried every trick in the book to prevent him from appearing before our courts on charges of corruption, the special crime fighting unit the Scorpions was disbanded by a Zuma controlled legislature, Mbeki was recalled as President of the country by September 2008 before concluding his term as President and finally Zuma was left off the hook when charges were dropped by a very politically embattled and compromised National Prosecuting Authority. Since the ANC Polokwane conference (2007) the country has been deeply divided, the ANC has split and a new party, the Congress of the People (COPE) has emerged from its ranks, various social forces have rallied in defence of the

constitution and the criminal justice system in our country. The union movement has also begun to rupture in some quarters as COPE aligned forces begin to build a rival union federation. Polokwane and Jacob Zuma's victory solicited a backlash from across civil society. Moreover, it cemented neo-stalinist populism, neo-corporatism and the black economic empowerment agenda as a new basis for bourgeois nationalism and state capitalism. The Nzimande/Cronin faction is deeply entrenched in this, but is also greatly responsible for the deep divisions inside the Alliance structures and society.

The 2009 Elections and the Political Suicide of the SACP

In the April 2009 elections the ANC led by Jacob Zuma won by less than a two-thirds majority. An ANC victory was predicted early on but this could not be taken for granted. While this was a very Americanised election in many ways, with crude caricatures of Obama like political moves particularly with regard to courting the youth vote, this election held more uncertainty for the ANC than any other. For the first time it faced an electoral challenge from a political force that could appeal to all South Africans but in particular its own black support base. Moreover, this was the first time the SACP was fighting this election not just as an ally but as a political grouping collapsed into and entrenched at the center of the ANC. These realities throw up two important features around the 2009 election: first, the dynamics underpinning the ANC election victory and second the implications for the SACP.

Many ANC supporters and leaders believe the ANC wins elections because it has a divine right to rule South Africa. The ANC is the 'national liberator', the ANC is the 'people' and the democracy belongs to the ANC and so on. Dangerous views. When one looks at the 2009 elections closely various dynamics helped propel the ANC to victory. These dynamics are increasingly becoming different for each election. First, as the custodian of nation building the ANC lost the trust of large sections of the population. The Zuma factor was seen as a threat to the future of the country and still is. However, a critical variable that managed perceptions for the ANC was the role of Nelson Mandela. He came out in support of his party the ANC and his endorsement reassured many in this society. His moral authority compensated for Zuma's lack of it. Second, the role of money cannot be underestimated. The ANC spent approximately R200 million to win this election campaign. It outspent all other parties, with the Democratic Alliance, the official opposition spending about R10 million. Three sources of finance were crucial for the ANC: patronage networks

linked to Black Economic Empowerment, the passing of party funding legislation on the eve of national elections in provincial legislatures, and external sources particularly from Angola, Libya and China. If we look at the external sources these are not countries led by leftwing governments but are authoritarian state capitalist regimes. Moreover, there are important interests linked to the ANC's campaign financing. How these interests cement with and underpin the new Polokwane project of state capitalism will be interesting to observe.

The third dynamic that underpins the ANC victory is the role of Zulu nationalism. In all provinces of South Africa ANC electoral support declined in the 2009 elections, except Kwazulu Natal. This is the home province of Jacob Zuma but also the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, Blade Nzimande. Kwazulu Natal witnessed a massive shift of electoral support to the ANC. A 20% swing of close to about two million votes required breaking the political grip of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), a reactionary and Zulu nationalist political force. As comrade Mazibuko Jara puts it in his analysis of this dynamic: 'the ANC had to become the new IFP' to win in this province. The fourth dynamic underpinning the ANC victory was its populist electoral promises. In the context of a deepening economic crisis, the ANC promised the most. Its election manifesto raised high expectations for increased social grants and social expenditures. Forecasts suggest an extra R40 billion would be required in the national fiscus to meet these promises in a context in which tax revenues are likely to decline as economic growth shrinks. Again the ANC had to pander to material interests to secure support. Research done by the Human Sciences Research Council on electoral patterns in South Africa concludes that South African's no longer vote based on party loyalty but on material interests.

Instead of the SACP contesting elections in the 2009 elections the Nzimande/Cronin faction collapsed it into the ANC. These forces are represented in the national leadership structures of the ANC and are now in cabinet positions in government. Communists are also in some provincial government positions. About 14% of elected representatives of the ANC in national and provincial government are from the SACP. There are two critical implications that flow this. First, with the general secretary, his deputy and other senior members of the politburo being placed in the national cabinet the independence of the Communist party has been lost. The leaders of the SACP in the national cabinet are not there as representatives of the SACP but are there as ANC representatives and bound by the discipline of the ANC. Given the dominance of this faction in the SACP and the proprietary claims they have over the SACP

they have even thrown out constitutional provisions that require the general secretary to be full time in the SACP, to suit their interests. The appropriate thing to do is for these leaders to resign from their leadership positions in the SACP.

Instead, they are bent on amending the constitution to suit their interests by convening a special conference. Moreover, they are going to attempt to use formalism to suggest the SACP still has some independence in this configuration. They are talking about a protocol with the ANC. Even if such frameworks fall into place the underlying relationship between the ANC and SACP is one of unequal power. The SACP has not built an independent and alternative bloc of forces around it but instead merely controls a few key affiliates of the trade union movement and believes it can bully its way through. Its base of power is narrow and vulnerable. The bottom line is that the SACP under the leadership of the Nzimande/Cronin faction have taken the SACP over the cliff; they have forced it to commit political suicide to suit their careerist ambitions. This is a betrayal of the working class and the poor.

The second implication the 2009 elections has for the SACP is that its surrender to bourgeois nationalism forces it into a reactionary politics. In the context of a deepening economic crisis and to ensure stability for state capitalism the SACP will attempt to contain and stage manage mass struggles. It will increasingly attempt to defend bourgeois nationalism by presenting it as left wing. It will secure a few concessions for the working class in the context of state capitalism but in the main the passive revolution will continue under Zuma but take a new form. During the elections campaign and even after the rhetoric from the SACP suggested the ANC was the champion of the working class and the poor. However, if we interrogate this and go beyond the left cover what do we see? The ANC did not fight the elections campaign through a critique of capitalism, including neoliberalism, it did not have an anti-imperialist aspect to its campaign (actually Zuma the working class hero was wooing investors and transnational capital), it took money from countries like China that have combined the worst of Western capitalism and Stalinised socialism and most importantly the ANC did not put forward a socialist program.

The reactionary role of the Nzimande/Cronin faction vis-à-vis the wider left is going to increase. Most importantly they are going to be the key enforcers who try to block a left re-alignment in South African politics. Being in bed with bourgeois nationalism gives neo-stalinist populism no other choice but also places it in a weak position. Their containment inside the ANC has already

begun under Zuma. Their own personal political ambitions are also going to force them to manage their presence carefully. They are surely looking at a post-Zuma scenario to ascend into key positions, more lucrative and prestigious than the junior cabinet posts they have now. For the Nzimande/Cronin faction to get what they want and secure what they have another bloody round of intra-ANC struggles will have to happen. These forces will have to capture the ANC and convert it into their 'vanguard'. In the end, how far will their ambitions and appetite for power take them? Will other bourgeois nationalist forces also hungry for power let them have what they want? Will the Nzimande/Cronin faction tear the ANC apart to get what they want in the next few years? They have already done a great deal of damage to the national liberation struggle, including destroying the future of the SACP. In other parts of the world where such strategic divergences have occurred such as in India, the Communist Party split in the 1960s. Will the rank and file in the SACP allow themselves to be bluffed and manipulated once more from the top?

Keeping History Open: The Struggle for a Democratic Left Project in South Africa

The logic of socialist renewal inside the SACP, if genuinely deepened and elaborated, could have placed the SACP at the cutting edge of re-aligning left politics in South Africa. It could have laid the basis for a post-soviet, post-social democratic and post-national liberation project: a democratic left project. This has not happened. Instead the organisation has been captured by a careerist faction that has killed inner-party democracy, abandoned socialist renewal and has taken the SACP, including sections of the working class, down a state capitalist path; a dead end for socialist politics. Their dream of converting the ANC into a vanguard party of the working class is a fundamental strategic mistake with serious implications for the future of South Africa. In this context those of us who have been silenced and beaten back in the SACP for differing with the undemocratic practices of the leadership, for championing the need for the SACP not to squander its moral authority and the need to keep strategic options open for the working class and the poor, beyond national liberation orthodoxies and neo-Stalinist populism, have to make hard choices.

The Nzimande/Cronin faction and their project of 'state-capitalism' does not represent a hegemonic left project and is not grounded in building the capacity of the working class and the poor to lead transformation from below. This is well documented in a book entitled: *Roots of Participatory Democracy- Democratic*

Communists in Kerala, India and South Africa. The Nzimande/Cronin faction will continue to manipulate, instrumentalise and control mass forces from above to legitimate their careerist ambitions and provide cover to bourgeois nationalism. What is to be done to ensure the socialist project is no longer hijacked by opportunism? How do we confront the treachery and betrayal of the South African working class by the Nzimande/Cronin faction? This is a fundamental battle which has to be waged but I do not believe it should be prosecuted in a lumpen and Stalinist way. Means and ends are important as I have been arguing. I believe the most effective way of keeping strategic options open for the working class, advancing socialist renewal and building the capacity for left politics in post-apartheid South Africa requires the following:

Building Ideological Capacity - This means re-engaging the rank and file inside the SACP and the wider left about socialist renewal. The premise for this engagement is recognising that all mainstream working class ideologies of the 20th century are in crisis: Stalinised Marxism-Leninism, social democracy and national liberation. This does not mean revisionism is the answer. On the contrary, there is a much more fundamental question facing socialist renewal in the 21st century. That is the question of what do we abandon? Let me use orthodox or Stalinised Marxism-Leninism as an example. I believe this entire edifice, including its Trotskyist variant, should be thrown overboard; without blinking an eye we should throw orthodox Marxism-Leninism into the dustbin of history. This includes abandoning core doctrines and practices: (i) vanguardism; (ii) socialism in one country; (iii) dictatorship of the proletariat; (iv) the cult of the personality and (v) dialectical materialism.

Besides the ugly expression orthodox Marxism-Leninism has inside the SACP and contemporary South Africa, there are other crucial reasons why it should be abandoned to make way for democratic left and socialist renewal. Some of these reasons derive from the interviews contained in this book. First, this is an unthinking and frozen Marxism. The categories and doctrines of orthodox Marxism-Leninism are part of a 'finished historical materialism'. This means it is a working class ideology that is closed and disassociated from a rapidly changing world. It carries within it certainties based on an understanding of a world very different from our own. To put it sharply, a Marxism born in a feudal society at the beginning of the 20th Century is inappropriate for the 21st Century. Hence, its dogmatic prescriptions for socialist change and politics do not provide answers to the contemporary world. Second, and because this a frozen Marxism, it is married to practices that have produced some of the worst horrors

of the 20th Century. The violence within the imagination of this Marxism is profoundly against the genuine emancipation of the workers and the poor. Actually, its history is a history of working class oppression rather than emancipation. Third, this is a Marxism bereft of a democratic impulse, both in terms of the political organisations it spawns and the society it seeks to build. It is a Marxism of a barrack socialism, in which the gun and the nuclear weapon impose change rather than the self organisation of the working class and the poor. It is a Marxism of statist change rather than socialist pluralism and the deepening of democracy; it reproduces barbarism rather than ends it.

Alongside the question of deciding what has to be abandoned, socialist renewal requires a research agenda around new themes for South African Marxism. Such a research agenda should place contemporary dimensions of capitalism within a new theoretical and analytical frame of historical materialism. Some of the themes that could inform such a research agenda could include: critique of Marxist orthodoxies, dialectical method and critical theory, global capitalism and crisis, a new analysis of the South African social formation and its contradictions, a peoples history of the South African struggle, learning from grass roots struggles, learning from non-Marxist anti-capitalist thought and so on. This book on *New Frontiers for Socialism in the 21st Century* is a modest resource, alongside others, that can contribute to this task;

Towards A Democratic Eco-Socialist Program - a programmatic politics is an essential ingredient for a new democratic left politics and it has to address the current contradictions of global capitalism. Moreover, a program centred politics is important in three other respects. First, such a program centred politics is required to anchor new Marxist and anti-capitalist perspectives around an ideological pole of attraction. It is about taking left politics beyond narrow social movement opposition and lobbying practices. It is about providing a new compass for socialist and left politics in South Africa. Second, such a program has to be constituted through participatory and bottom up engagements. It has to be defined through the voices of workers in factories and on farms, the unemployed in townships and informal settlements, women's movements, HIV/AIDS movements, gay and lesbian movements, environmental movements, religious movements, and various other social forces. Ultimately a new political program for socialist politics in South Africa has to emanate from the lived realities of exploitation, environmental injustice and oppression. It cannot be drawn up by an arrogant and self proclaimed ideologue floating above the struggle. It has to be the product of a collective intellectual

process rooted in struggles, so that it is owned by mass forces. A program for a democratic left politics must be grounded and emanate from the actual experience of democracy and it should provide a 'school' for building capacities for participatory democracy. A third and crucial reason for a program centred left politics, is that it fosters grass roots activism. It is about stimulating the unity of theory and practice and ensuring a democratic left politics provides solutions and articulates alternatives in actual struggles. In this sense, it is about inserting a critical left discourse into public life. Moreover, the unity of theory and practice around a program centred politics builds commitment and loyalty to collective ideas rather than to 'big men'. It assists in overcoming the problem of the cult of the personality.

Building a Democratic Left Historic Bloc - Various political forces are beginning to talk the language of ecological crisis. On the one extreme, capital believes 'greening the economy' is another market opportunity. On the other side, state capitalists (sometimes referred to as SACP leaders) give a 'green wash' to another wave of state led capitalist modernisation. South Africa needs a new political project, an alternative, that puts forward a democratic eco-socialist program as the way forward for the country. Such a program should demonstrate theoretically, empirically and concretely an alternative direction for the post-apartheid political economy. However, for such a programmatic alternative to become an option for society requires rooting it in society through struggles and popular engagements. It requires building consent in a bottom up manner, on the terrain of civil society, for such an alternative. In this process a democratic left politics has to be the means to find convergences, develop shared perspectives and engender common understandings for this programmatic alternative. Such a process to accumulate new social forces including mass movements, trade unions and the left intelligentsia around the imperative of taking forward a democratic eco-socialist solution for South Africa. This amounts to building a new democratic left historical bloc of forces with the capacity to lead society.

Deciding on a political instrument - the SACP does not belong to a faction. If the dominant faction continues to control the organisation and fails to resign from leadership positions (because of crossing over to government), continues in an undemocratic manner, refuses to accept a plurality of currents in the leadership and alternative strategic viewpoints, then there are two possible options. These are not mutually exclusive in my view and are available to those who want to advance the project of socialist renewal in post-apartheid South Africa, keep strategic options open for the working class and build the capacities for left

politics: (i) the split that has already been imposed by the dominance of the Nzimande/Cronin faction should be formalised. Those of us that are forced to leave could re-found the SACP as the 'Democratic Communist Party of South Africa'; and/or (ii) a new people's front is created based on the United Democratic Front (UDF) of the 1980s, which unites converging left forces.

The UDF was a people's organisation and contributed to harnessing mass and popular power. It provided the institutional frame to bring together diverse ideological currents and social forces around resisting apartheid. The challenge would be to utilise the UDF or a new United Democratic Left Front to unite mass and popular forces around a new Democratic Eco-Socialist Program. Crucial to such a political instrument is creating an internal universe in which the values and practices of democratic left politics prevails. Moreover such an instrument should not be vanguardist, electoralist or party-movement in its mould. It should be a movement-of-democratic left forces, including a newly constituted Democratic Communist Party of South Africa. Such a formation should aim to be a political form rooted in bottom up practices. It should be about building grass roots capacity to advance and utilise logics of participatory democracy. Even if an electoral dimension has to emerge such a dimension should be a mere tactic subordinate to building self conscious mass power and advancing 'counter hegemonic generative' alternatives from below.

International Solidarity - is a crucial pillar and condition for advancing a new democratic left project in South Africa. From the interviews conducted for this book it is apparent that global left forces share certain common concerns and challenges. Most importantly, they want to journey with others that have come to the same frontier. The form of this renewed solidarity has become more defined through the World Social Forum and other important intersection points for democratic left solidarity. Such forms of international solidarity are very different from taking the line from 'Beijing' for instance. Building international support and extending international solidarity through some these institutional platforms can only strengthen the advance of a new democratic left project in South Africa.

Limits Facing a Democratic Left Project

A new Democratic Left Project is very much about a new way of engaging in left politics; in its essence this is about a new socialist politics. It is a politics grounded in values, self aware about means and ends, serious about building

bottom up capacities, program centred activism and encourages self conscious collective struggles (both oppositional and generative). To embark down a road to build such a new left politics in post-apartheid South Africa requires an honesty about the limits facing such a project. In my view there are three crucial limits or constraints facing such an initiative. The first relates to the 'wait and see' or 'sitting on the fence' left. These are progressives who want more from post-apartheid South Africa, who have critical perspectives on aspects of the transition, who dabble in left initiatives but who rationalise the failure to realign left forces by arguing the ambiguities of history and the national liberation project. In a sense there is belief in a false hope that the ANC-led Alliance will eventually deliver on its promises. This is despite the trajectory of embourgeoisement that has taken hold and the state capitalism coming to the fore. In a sense the mythologies of national liberation still have an emotive appeal. For the left intellectuals that hold this position the policy discourses and objectives of ANC-led Alliance conferences are still the guide to change. Formalism is more important than substance and actual practices.

The danger with this orientation is that it easily engenders an 'apologist discourse' in the current conjuncture. This is an orientation that was advocated by the late Harold Wolpe, a leading South African Marxist, concerning the role of intellectuals in the national liberation struggle. Is this approach to defining the role of left intellectuals still relevant in post-apartheid South Africa? Should the objectives of state capitalism, and very possibly an authoritarian state capitalism, still be the objectives that guide left intellectual forces today in South Africa? Is a 'passive revolution' that demobilises or manipulates mass initiative still a left project? The Wolpe position is an orthodoxy of the national liberation movement which has to be ruptured at a common sense level. Its lack of correspondence to the new realities in post-apartheid South Africa need to be challenged.

A second crucial limit facing a democratic left project relates to the de-radicalisation of political consciousness in the ranks of the ANC-led alliance and within society. This is a function of the absence of political education, electoralism and the emergence of new careerist leadership layers in the unions and ANC-led Alliance. Increasingly politics is defined by the party machine and hierarchies of the 'national liberation movement'. Militant rhetoric, the line from the top, media spectacles, celebrity performances, the cult of the personality, stage managed mass action and scandal is the stuff of contemporary South African politics. The media does not assist this but feeds into the sensationalis-

ing and hype. Some journalists even participate in public life as extensions of factions in the ANC-led Alliance and other political parties. Absent is rigorous analysis, alternative left interpretations and conceptions of politics beyond powerful individuals. A mindless militancy together with a crass liberalism permeates South African public life. For a new democratic left politics to take hold it has to rival these two monopolies that operate in public discourse. An alternative media has to be created and new 'pedagogies of the oppressed' have to come to the fore from below. Alternative sources of information and spaces for thinking, understanding and interpreting the world have to be consciously created through public forums, the inter-net, independent film-making, magazines, newsletters and other tools for mass empowerment. The contest of common sense is a big challenge and the 'war of position' in civil society requires new tactics to create a new democratic left political culture.

A third and critical limit facing the emergence of a democratic left politics is the role of money in South African politics. Patronage, careerism, empowerment deals and corruption have become a big part of South African politics. Class mobility provides a powerful attraction even to the working class. This opens the way to cooption, division and deradicalisation. For a new democratic left politics to take root requires the hard slog of grass roots activism, sacrifice and a firm commitment to values. In short it requires a moral authority. There are many in South Africa who still believe that the ugliness of a racist and exploitative past can only be overcome with fundamental transformation in the present. The challenge is to politically organise such forces.

The Future in the Present

We are living through a time of barbarism. Global capitalism at the beginning of the 21st century has become increasingly moribund, obsolete and destructive. To confront this crisis requires a renewed socialist alternative. The hope of the left in the South African context was a renewed socialist project emanating from within the South African Communist Party. With the unbanning of the oldest Communist Party in Africa in 1990 my generation embraced this possibility with passion, commitment and hope. We placed ourselves at the frontier of evolving a Democratic Communist imagination and project for the 21st century. This book and the global journey we went on were an integral part of widening the horizons of renewal inside the SACP and the left more broadly in South Africa. This book was and is meant to be a modest contribution in the search for a renewed left politics and socialist project. We have offered this book as a

resource for conversations, debates, popular education and further learning.

However, as we journeyed inside the SACP we were betrayed by the ambitions of a morally, politically and ideologically bankrupt leadership faction. This faction has abandoned the project of socialist renewal and has chosen a careerist path under the banner of a neo-stalinist populism. Instead of the Afro-neoliberal Mbeki destroying the SACP, it has been the Nzimande/Cronin faction that have destroyed it and imposed their personal ambitions on the class struggle. The barbarism of their neo-Stalinist populism is merely one expression of the barbarism of our time. They represent a politics with no future except self interest. Despite this betrayal of the workers and the poor, and the blocking function the Nzimande/Cronin faction will play in trying to prevent the emergence of new left project in South Africa, the struggle will and must continue. The left has made many compromises and has lost a lot of ground in post-apartheid South Africa. The way forward was not to reduce the SACP to a corpse and to surrender sections of the working class to bourgeois nationalism.

Instead, we need to reject short cuts and build in a bottom up and painstaking way a serious socialist alternative: a democratic left project. Such a democratic left project needs to be much more self aware about means and ends, not trapped in the myths and orthodoxies of national liberation ideology and should be grounded in a post-national liberation politics drawing on a peoples history of struggle against racial oppression and contemporary global capitalism. It is a left project for present and future post-apartheid generations. This might take a long time to achieve but personally this is a journey I have embarked on, even if I don't see the fruits in my lifetime. This is the most important lesson I take from the experiences, intellectual insights and contributions made by those interviewed in this book. An alternative to the barbarism of global capitalism is a civilisational alternative; it is a democratic eco-socialism.

Does the socialist left have alternatives to the crisis ridden model of global capitalism? If there is a confidence to challenge global capitalism are the emerging socialist alternatives still steeped in soviet, social democratic or national liberation orthodoxies that have failed? Or are we seeing the expression of socialist alternatives grounded in a critical appraisal of the past, a concrete understanding of transnationalising capitalism, a new imagination and a new ethics of means and ends? Has post-Soviet rethinking and practical ferment engendered new ways of engaging in socialist politics? Is socialist politics at a new frontier in the 21st century? These are the questions at the heart of this book. In the South African context the response to these questions begins with Joe Slovo's attempt to disengage from the distortions of Stalinism. With the collapse of the Soviet Union Joe Slovo initiated a debate and presented an important argument for the renewal of socialism. His pamphlet *Has Socialism Failed?* pointed to problems with Stalinism, the importance of reclaiming a social science basis for Marxist theory and practice as opposed to dogmatic orthodoxy, the importance of the link between socialism and democracy and the need to evaluate actually existing socialism through the category of 'socialist economic alienation'. In many ways Slovo's contribution laid the basis for a new ideological and programmatic orientation in the South African Communist Party (SACP). This appealed to many inside and outside the SACP.

For many the logic of socialist renewal held out the prospect of a new left project for South Africa. However, this trajectory of socialist renewal was constantly threatened by the resurgence of Marxist-Leninist dogma, unreconstructed social democratic formulas and national liberation orthodoxy. As part of strengthening the current of socialist renewal inside the SACP and amongst the broader left in South Africa, two SACP activists involved in national political education embarked on a global journey to dialogue with left forces at the cutting edge of renewing socialism and left politics. At the beginning of 1999 these SACP activists interviewed leading Marxist activists, intellectuals and representatives of left wing political organisations about the challenges and prospects for a new socialist politics in the 21st Century. The insights and learning from these conversations are contained in this book but could not be published given the increasing neo-Stalinist dominance engulfing the SACP, particularly since its 10th Congress (1998). Now, for the first time, the conversations had on this global journey are being placed in the public arena in the hope that the renewal of socialist thinking can be further debated and engaged with in practice, as part of constituting a new Democratic Left politics in South Africa. Many of the themes explored in the interviews speak to challenges facing left politics in the present. Such themes include:

- Approaches to understanding the crisis of global capitalism.
- The role of transnational neoliberalism and its consequences for the global political economy.
- What is Stalinism?
- Defining new horizons for historical materialism or Marxist theory and analysis.
- What can be learned from the experiences and practices of post-soviet and post social-democratic left parties such as the Brazilian Workers Party (the largest socialist party in Latin America), the Left Party in Sweden, the Party for Democratic Socialism in Germany, the Party of Labour in Russia, the experience of left wing Euro-Communism and the Refounded Communist Party in Italy?
- What can be learned from popular movements like the Zapatistas (Mexico), the Landless Workers Movement (Brazil), the Peoples Campaign for Decentralisation in Kerala, India, and new forms of trade union struggle?
- Strategic challenges for popular and class struggles.
- Defining new compass points and programmatic content for a 21st century socialism.

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