SOCIALISM
OF THE FUTURE

WILLY BRANDT
The Future of
Democratic Socialism

ALFONSO GUERRA
The Old and New Socialism

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the Swedish Model

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EDITORIAL PREFACE
Tom Bottomore

*Socialism of the Future* was launched in 1990, published by the Fundación Sistema (Madrid). The first issue of the English edition, because it appears two years later, includes a selection of articles (slightly revised in some cases to take account of subsequent events) from the first two numbers of the Spanish edition, and our second issue will contain articles from nos 3–4 of that edition. Thereafter the journal, beginning with vol. 2, issue 1, in Spring 1993, will be published regularly twice a year, in spring and autumn.

The journal now appears in several European languages – English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Russian and Spanish – and this will indicate its first distinctive feature. It is a European journal of political thought and debate, which brings together at its annual seminars socialist scholars and politicians from across the continent. This does not mean, however, that it is narrowly European in outlook. On the contrary, it is very much open to global problems, in particular to those of the environment and of the North-South divide, as will be seen from some of the articles in the present and subsequent issues. Moreover, participants in the annual seminars have included some from outside Europe, notably from the USA and Latin America, and a Brazilian edition of the journal began publication at the end of 1991.

This European base, essential for the future development of socialism in the world, is however only one of the features distinguishing our journal. Alfonso Guerra, in his presentation of the first number in 1990, indicated some of the crucial issues with which it would deal – socialism and ideology, the new industrial revolution and the changing nature of work, the upheavals in Eastern Europe and their consequences, the new kind of social order that socialists might now begin to visualise – and the editorial board, in its outline of a programme of activities, enlarged on these questions.

The scale and rapidity of economic, social, political and cultural changes over the past two decades are perhaps even greater than those of the first industrial revolution, and they will have a profound effect, already apparent indeed, on the traditional working class and on wage earners more generally. The reduction of working time, and the guarantee of a minimum standard of living for all members of society, will also change the situation of the capitalist class and may bring into existence a new kind of capitalism. These multifarious, ongoing changes oblige us to reflect seriously on the theory and practice of the socialist movement today, and to initiate an open, uninhibited and creative debate about its future. This is the purpose of our seminars and our journal.

The next issue of the journal (vol. 1, issue 2)
will be concerned partly with ideas about the nature of a socialist economy, partly with questions of ideology, and will include articles by Alfonso Guerra, Milovan Djilas, Tom Bottomore, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Ulf Himmelstrand, Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher. The third issue (vol. 2, issue 1) has as its theme 'the Left after the crisis of communism' and will include articles by Jan Tinbergen, Goran Therborn, Ernest Mandel, Pablo González Casanova and Jiri Pelikan. Future issues are planned on the technological revolution and the future of labour, transformations in the international order, and the North–South relationship.

T.B.
August 1992
No one will question that democratic socialism, both as a concept and as a political reality, has a long history. But in the upheaval of the passage into the last decade of this century – particularly in those areas of Europe governed until now by communism – this history has become dramatically relevant to the world today. At the beginning of the 1990s several socialist parties in Europe – social democrats as we have traditionally called ourselves in Central Europe and Scandinavia – could boast 100 or even up to 125 years of effort in the pursuit of political liberty and social liberation. In the summer of 1989 International Socialists commemorated the founding of the Socialist International in Paris 100 years ago.

On the road so far there have been not only successes, but also tragic miscalculations and schisms. The danger of fascism was not taken seriously enough to avoid its wars of conquest. At the end of the Second World War, however, as after the First World War, democratic socialists and social democrats played an especially important role in the reconstruction of several countries. The international community of these parties and movements spread beyond Europe, with much more vigour and influence than before. The post-Stalinist crisis in countries with communist governments proved the correctness of democratic socialists who had pointed out not only differences in degree, but also in basic principles, between communism and social democracy. Even in leadership circles, ‘reformism’ came back on the agenda. Parties’ names changed as well, although naturally their content continued to be more important than their label.

The fact remains that the question of the future of democratic socialism is still open. A renowned liberal considers that the moment has arrived to proclaim the end of the century of social democracy because its mission – in industrialised countries – has been accomplished with the establishment of democracy and a welfare state. The twilight of the gods of Soviet communism, the ecological dangers of the self-destruction of humankind, together with the growing poverty of the Third World, have engendered doubt in some people whose objective has been to work for a socialist future. Ideas which for more than a century had promised to cure society of its most serious ailments seemed to be out-of-date. Such new challenges need new responses. After a decade of debate and constructive work, a series of countries offer preliminary, but workable solutions. The Socialist International Congress held in Stockholm in June 1989 passed a new declaration of principles which offers a realistic perspective of a world at peace, which is fair, democratic and environmentally intact. As is evident, the debate will continue. But with this new declaration of principles, democratic socialists have, without
doubt, asserted their right to participate in the shaping of the twenty-first century.

Parallel to a realisation of the new principles, many of the member parties of the Socialist International are engaged in an in-depth debate about new programmes. Regardless of the extent to which the conditions and direction of this policy renewal are changed, now or in the future, the basic principles are still valid. The aspirations of democratic socialists are social justice, democratisation, the establishment of an effective economic system based on constitutional respect for human rights. In short, democratic socialism aspires to a free and equal society. Democratic socialists have taken various routes, but their common values are fundamental. The values go back to working-class experience, national liberation movements, and the cultural tradition of mutual aid and solidarity in many parts of the world. They draw their inspiration from different religious and humanist traditions. Regardless of cultural and ideological differences, all socialists embrace the ideal of a democratic world society at peace, in freedom, with justice based on mutual solidarity.

NEW REFLECTIONS ON PROGRESS

How can we promise progress in a world plagued by incessant destruction of the environment, wasteful use of resources, vertiginous technological development and arms arsenals which threaten our existence? The key answer is that the course of history has been oriented towards progress. This obvious point, unquestioned for an entire century, was for a long time shared by democratic socialists, liberals, and at times conservatives, as well as more than a few who embraced the promise of communism.

Condorcet, philosopher of progress at the time of the French Revolution, argued shortly after 1789 that the dynamic of history consists in a necessary evolution toward increased freedom, happiness, harmony, and human skill in taming the natural environment. This idea has exerted a profound effect ever since political tendencies were organised into parties. However, controversy arose with respect to the significant question of how to promote such a development in the most efficient and just manner. The key topics in this historical dispute were the nature of democratic principles, the role of distribution, the demand for justice, and the question of economic, social and political conditions for real freedoms. In this controversy with other political forces democratic socialism is behind schedule with respect to what it offered originally, but it can nevertheless offer a positive overall balance sheet. It is impossible to deny progress towards greater democracy, increased security and enhanced social freedom in those countries with strong social democratic or socialist parties.

Nonetheless, the possibilities and conditions of progress, and progressive ideals, have suffered profound changes and become in turn a subject of political controversy. Progress in economic and social policy are not necessarily complementary: they may even be opposed one to another. New technical advances are considered in and of themselves as representing progress. But they usually prove to be a risk to nature, without necessarily guaranteeing social welfare or individual or collective freedoms. This means that we have to think again about what we mean when we speak of progress. The concept cannot be left in the hands of those who avail themselves of it to ornament policies bereft of either liberty or welfare. But the simple and even stubborn persistence with which this guiding principle has been treated and defended for more than a century does not bring us any closer to our objective. On the contrary – in the words of Jean Jaurès, spoken on the threshold of this century – the coals and not the dross of democratic socialism's tradition must be preserved. In other words, we must dare to think radically in order to show which ideals are still valid and which must be modified to achieve a democratic socialism.

CHALLENGES POSED BY THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Since the Second World War, for the first time in history, extraordinary technologies confer the capacity of posing a death threat to the continued life of the species and the natural environment. Our sense of responsibility demands a new look at how we must modify our behaviour in order to avoid gambling on – and thereby losing – the possibility of enjoying safe and self-sustaining life-systems. It is increasingly recognised that chemical, biological and atomic systems of mass destruction have become a grave risk for all human life. Their potential effects know no limits. These systems are automated and thereby error-prone. They risk being used on a pseudo-rational calculation of success inasmuch as their accuracy gives an advantage to surprise attack.

The welcome easing of tension in current rela-
tions between the nuclear powers, and the easing of tension in general between the East and West, does not alter the fact that over-armament constitutes a permanent threat to human life in numerous areas of the world. This risk should be obviated by a realistic policy for peace. Democratic socialism, as a historical and theoretical movement advocates a worldwide policy of mutual safety and security. We stand resolutely for the purpose of guaranteeing peace by increasing international cooperation.

On the other hand, for the first time in history, we also have civilian technologies which confer the power to damage and even irreparably destroy the fundamental natural elements of life. These technologies are destructive elements which are incompatible with the laws of natural cycles: we fill the air, water and earth with products derived from our scientific-technical civilisation, and thereby jeopardise the natural regeneration of the environment. The contradiction between what we can achieve from a technical perspective and the consequences which we inflict upon nature have intensified since the scientific and technological revolution of the eighteenth century. The task confronting us is to harmonise the techniques employed for the domination of nature with our responsibility toward future generations. Nevertheless, renouncing technical progress would not bring us closer to the realisation of the objective. It would be a negative rather than a positive answer. What we need, from an ecological perspective, are more intelligent and less harmful techniques and procedures. The democratic socialism of the coming years must establish itself as a defender of an enduring development coordinated worldwide.

Human dignity, individualism and self-determination were always guiding ideals of democratic socialism. A technology left to its own devices, not only could undermine human dignity, but humanity itself. Genetic engineering is one of the most alarming examples of how advanced technology acquires a political character. The same can be said of atomic energy, new communication techniques or new production systems. Because their risks affect all of us the decisions on alternatives should be made in the framework of political principles. A political project for the future must develop objectives and procedures for a democratic control of technology. This does not involve obstacles to progress. What is involved instead is that decisions affecting the future of the world should not be taken only in laboratories and board meetings.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WORLD ECONOMY

For the first time in history we can talk of a true globalisation of travel and telecommunications, economic relations, and flows of money and capital. Never before has economic development in one part of the world had such direct and enduring effects on the rest of the planet. Under these circumstances, high interest rates in financial centres increase the debt crisis. Exorbitant repayment obligations and the flight of capital freeze development – with a serious social, ecological and political consequences. Increasing numbers see themselves oppressed in the impoverished economy of the informal sector. Deprivation and misery exhaust both people and natural resources. And mounting social tensions endanger fragile democracies which, in many cases, have only recently been established.

Meanwhile, in the world markets a savage struggle is waged to obtain advantages in competition. The poor countries do not grow; many African countries are even regressing, without hope for the future. Structural reconversion is a challenge in all parts of the world. But too often it means adjusting to less than before. In the industrialised countries of Western Europe the costs of structural reconversion are massive, with persistent unemployment and social stress caused by the new requirements of mobility and adaptability. The law of the stongest and fittest, and the methods of Manchesterian capitalism are gaining popularity. Fascinated by the growth in the Far East, some ‘modernising’ conservatives intend to lessen the importance of the welfare state. But their efforts to implant Thatcherism at a worldwide level will be countered by the forces of democratic socialism, and thereby overcome.

It is vital to recognise that the political groups (and trade unions) whose birth stemmed from the struggle against the abuses of capitalism, were more concerned with the distribution of income than with management. But such questions of economic management could not be postponed indefinitely. Besides which, there was the crisis produced by the deterioration of the so-called socialist economies in the Soviet Union and its allies. The differences between democratic socialism and authoritarian collectivism became obvious, not only partially, but overall. We are in favour of economic competition, but against blind capitulation to the markets, not least to the world market. We need public responsibility in their management and close international cooperation.
Going it alone leads to a dead-end street, since national and state law provisions can easily be obviated by companies and banks which do business worldwide. The European Community’s greater involvement in social and ecological issues constitutes a comprehensive project of cooperation at a regional level worthy of support. But in order for regionalisation not to result in the undesirable formation of blocks and protectionist wars, there also must be interregional agreements.

No one doubts any longer that unrestrained industrialisation causes global damage. However, in many places the dangers to the environment have contributed to a radical change of consciousness. That these risks do not respect borders was demonstrated by the clouds of radiation which emanated from Chernobyl. The fact that the consumption of resources in industrialised countries causes global environmental catastrophes was known long before the discovery that the hole in the ozone layer was continuing to expand. People are gradually beginning to understand and appreciate that the global destruction of the environment is to a large extent accelerated by underdevelopment. The Brundtland Commission’s report for the United Nations has concentrated above all on the global dimension. The Socialist International statement presented in Stockholm supported this strategy for ecological security.

Many advances would have been made already if people thought at a global level and acted at a local level in a responsible way. Industrialised societies have the financial means and technical capability for an ecological transformation. It should be possible to awaken sufficient political interest and will to restrain short-range economic interests. Global environmental problems will not be resolved solely because the industrialised countries in the East and West reduce their domestic risks. Global action is necessary. If one knows that everyday poverty obliges millions of people to exploit and deplete nature’s resources, then one must work to ensure that the South progresses not only in terms of the environment but also in terms of human dignity. It is not enough to sound the alarm about encroaching deserts, and about new evidence concerning the risks of climatic change caused by the destruction of tropical forests. We must likewise be willing to change development strategies on a worldwide scale. In this regard, democratic socialists have an especially important role to play.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

New threats are not only negative; they also offer exceptional opportunities for collaborating, joining forces and overcoming oppression and inequalities. The democratic socialism of the future must take advantage of these opportunities. The long-range tendency towards the globalisation of politics demands adoption of new concepts of internationalism. We have been – and are – against decision-making on the basis of self-interest. We favour both responsibility and decision-making by common consent, especially international cooperation. At the same time, complete independence of its member parties has always been a key principle for the Socialist International. Nevertheless we must devote ourselves to closer collaboration, since common consideration of problems requires concerted political action. Arriving at a consensus is not always easy, not even in the socialist group of the European Parliament. However, progress at an international level is possible if individual interests are restrained. This is an urgent matter given the opposition of established forces. We cannot allow ourselves to move at a snail’s pace. Taking into account that the margins of national political action are more and more narrow, international cooperation is becoming a special necessity for democratic socialists.

With a view to a democratically organised world society, we must organise international cooperation in order to achieve agreements on peace, the economy, the environment and development, technology and other issues. The updating of the internationalist traditions of the socialist movement will have to be a cornerstone of our future policy. The contrast between the well-being of industrialised societies in the northern hemisphere and the areas of misery in the southern hemisphere resounds more notoriously and unbearably than ever before. Underdevelopment and millions of deaths caused by starvation are the fatal destiny of a large part of humanity. Today there are more than 800 million people languishing in the most absolute poverty; they lead a deplorable existence far below minimum life standards. These numbers will continue to grow if the present trends of demographic growth continue.

The injustice of the world economic system, of international financial relations and military expenditure, obstruct the progress which could ensure basic sustenance for all. The daily threat to life offends human dignity. Bringing it to an
end is in the interest of both the North and South. Only mutual balance and equilibrium will enable us to achieve a world at peace, and global well-being. We need a world in which all people have the chance to gain a reasonably safe and secure existence and dignified life. Solidarity should be a worldwide value. For this reason democratic socialism must exert itself more forcefully to create conditions in the South which permit steadier, firmer progress. We need a new ordering of international relations and of the corresponding international institutions so that the interests of the South are taken properly into account. In this sense – as already stressed by the Socialist International – savings from arms cuts should benefit the developing countries.

Thus the principles of a democratic socialist future imply:

- a new policy of mutual security, developing the recent openings between the East and the West;
- an ecological transformation of industry and developing societies;
- a social dimension to innovation and technological change;
- a major shift in North-South relations.

These basic objectives should make possible a policy which is valid for the future, regardless of the differences which may exist between societies in other respects. Such changes should replace an assumption of linear growth with a concept of self-critical progress. It has been held by some that spontaneous economic growth automatically produces more liberty, justice and personal happiness. Today, this idea has been discarded. This does not mean that we must distance ourselves from the objectives of emancipation, but rather that we must be more sensitive, critical and attentive to the length of time needed to achieve a free, safe and secure life for all people. Democratic socialism therefore continues to be the historical movement for progress. Of course, it is clear that previous paths are no longer valid or lead us in the wrong direction. But the democratic socialist movement has a historical obligation to defend and organise the new progress.

NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR DIALOGUE

The newest and most encouraging feature of change evident today is the fact that key leaders have recognised that the interests of mankind should overrule the interests of any one group or region. If the reform programmes in the Soviet Union, which were linked to the name of Mikhail Gorbachev, gained strong support, the results would be of tremendous importance for the entire world, and the same is true with regard to the success of the democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Both are temporarily obscured by a relapse into an objectively obsolete nationalism.

One of the most important signs of hope in our time is the beginning of a new dialogue that heightens the awareness of the general interests of humanity. Attitudes of understanding and cooperation have displaced dogma at key levels of international relations. In spite of discrepancies and differences, the space for a common point of view is expanding, which will benefit the whole political spectrum. The democratic socialist movement can and should guide such a dialogue between different positions, values and ideas. It should thereby be able to make a positive contribution to the development of a new political culture at the international level, promoting debate and encouraging diversity, while seeking joint solutions to common problems.

Even allowing for recent changes in the Soviet Union there are still important differences in fundamental values, and in attitudes towards human rights. The differences concern a range of social and political issues, including the form and functions of democracy, and the structure and scope of pluralism. Certainly there is no magic formula for realising social change without conflict. Democratic socialists are conscious both of the difficulty of guaranteeing social justice in a market economy and of the energy necessary to guarantee and develop democracy and constitutional forms of government. We are ready to contribute our experience, but we cannot offer infallible recipes.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE: HUMAN RIGHTS

A key to the future is the defence of human rights. Democratic socialists are not going to waver on this issue. Regardless of the different routes to reform chosen worldwide for entering the twenty-first century, protection of human rights is the basis for progress in either the North or South, East or West. But democratic socialists consider themselves to be unconditional defenders of human rights. In the future, if possible, we will be even more inflexible when denouncing human rights violations, and we will, as energeti-
cally as possible, demand changes where guarantees are inadequate. The liberal rights of freedom cannot be ignored, but they are not the only important ones. We also oppose the interpretation, defended by traditional communists, that the rights of social protection are the sole essential ones. For the sake of human dignity, human rights cannot be ranked, divided or set off one against the other. The liberal rights of freedom, the democratic rights of participation, and the social rights of protection are conditioned each by the other. Only together and jointly can they guarantee human liberty.

Equality between men and women is a great challenge for the democratic socialists of the future. Anyone who takes human rights seriously must fight for complete social equality of men and women. It is only on this basis that we can take full advantage of opportunities for society's progress and ensure the values, ways of thought and experience that women contribute to the humanisation of society. All societies are confronted with this challenge, although some have further to travel than others in order to achieve this equality.

FOR AN OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

It is not by chance that many reformers in communist, or formerly communist, countries have rediscovered a large part of that which has concerned the democratic socialist movement through its history. When capitalist domination and market forces were perverting the bourgeois revolution's call for liberty, socialists claimed that freedom would only become real when it applied in all domains. An equal and effective freedom can only exist when people can jointly and democratically decide those issues which affect their common lives. Establishing a politically guaranteed and socially comprehensible democracy is the focal point of the democratic socialist vision. The dignity of human beings and their inalienable right to take personal decisions themselves, and other decisions democratically, is central to that vision.

The vision of a democratic society is the common bond between democratic socialists around the world: it means independent organisation in the world of work, society's shared responsibility with regard to economic progress, and effective control of political and economic power. This excludes both centralised state power over the means of production and the domination of private property independent from society. Social control of economic power includes market relationships. When the market does not ignore social responsibility it is a better mechanism for economic regulation than centralised bureaucracy can be.

Democratic socialist parties determine the instruments of social control in several ways based on the differences which exist between the level of progress in their respective countries and their different traditions. The role of private enterprise, cooperatives, the tendency towards associations, co-management arrangements and the planning framework are emphasised and valued differently. They all coincide completely, however, in the basic idea of a mixed and democratic economic system. Economic democracy is also a fundamental goal for the future, because it guarantees the dignity of working people, is an instrument for controlling power, and because social participation in economic decisions will continue to be necessary. It is also an essential condition to make effective the fight against the injustice of unemployment.

Industrialised societies in the West have for some time witnessed an unprecedented trend to individualism; this trend has its origins in improved social well-being, increased possibilities for education and training, and the existence of basic social guarantees. Deeply-rooted, traditional ways of life are disappearing. The same can be said in general about the former culture of the workers' movement, which for almost a century made possible a collectivism in which workers and their families, from the cradle to the grave, could feel protected and secure. This culture of solidarity has lost much of its significance. Many male and female workers and employees in the professions, with a good salary and educational background, have never known this collective experience. They often develop a pronounced individualist consciousness and consider themselves to be the authors of their own success and circumstances. They also enjoy, at all levels, the possibility of choosing among various alternatives, or in other words, a margin of manoeuvre for their freedom which was never before available to workers. Conservative and neo-liberal circles often embody this new individualism successfully. However, in policy terms the eventual results may well be a lowered standard of living, reduced social safeguards and reduced educational opportunities. In such case, the...
margin of manoeuvre for workers' individual liberty would be considerably reduced.

THE NEW CHALLENGE

All of this means a new challenge for democratic socialism in the developed industrialised societies. For some groups such a programme – at first glance – may not seem to be an acceptable vision of the future. On the one hand we must welcome new possibilities for freedom – the choice of opportunities and lifestyles, new forms of communication and work – precisely because we support individual freedom. On the other hand, we also must make it clear that certain social conditions are necessary for the individual freedom of the weak and dependent. The new individualism itself is based on specific social conditions.

Thus the chance for democratic socialism to advance new and credible perspectives cannot be fulfilled only by calls for solidarity. Rather it means presenting specific economic, ecological, educational and cultural programmes which meet real social needs in such a way that a high degree of individual freedom can be achieved by all members of society. The shape of the industrialised societies of the future will be determined not only by new technologies at work but also by the impact of such technologies on life itself. With some reason, it has been claimed that these will be 'risk societies'. But this means not only risk to health and life at work. Wider social concerns also must be addressed when confronting new technologies.

For instance, there is a risk that an ever-increasing number of people – due partly to a shortening of working time – will find themselves reduced to the role of passive consumers of services fostered by powerful leisure groups. Under such conditions, fewer people would be able to gain their own experience in life, or develop their own individual creativity. The result would be a society which produced more wealth, and allowed more comfort, but reduced more people to a state of passivity and dependency. It would fulfil Aldous Huxley's forecast of an unacceptable 'negative utopia'.

Therefore, today as much as at the outset, democratic socialism must concern itself with the wider realm of freedom. This means both ensuring personal choice and making it possible for individuals, through joint action, to achieve together what they cannot gain by acting only by themselves. This vision demands no modification. In a society which is both determined, and increasingly threatened, by consumerism, political culture plays a key role. Cultural policies must not only provide access to the widest possible range of experience, but also offer chances for individual self-expression in such a way that we become the masters of this scientific and technical civilisation, and not its victims. In contrast with the passing fashions of a manipulative leisure industry we need cultural policies to liberate individual and social creativity.

CHANCES FOR THE FUTURE

Today's world not only embodies new risks; it also provides unprecedented opportunities. We need to ensure that the scientific and technical revolution is in harmony with nature; that it can increase employment and job security, and also improve living standards and lifestyles under conditions of increased leisure. For this the revolution needs to be consciously shaped not only with a view to a better future, but also with a vision for humanity. This means the democratisation of society and decision-making. It also means a worldwide democratic society which can achieve peace and cooperation between peoples in an increasingly complex society. For democratic socialists, such a future is not only a vision, it also is a practical agenda for respecting human dignity.
THE OLD SOCIALISM

The first thing that one realises when writing about the socialism of the past and the socialism of the future is that we are part of a process of in-depth re-thinking of many of the fundamental premises and analyses upon which socialism has been based for more than a century. In 1985 I remarked in the Javea meeting that awareness is beginning to spread that some of the old formulations of socialist thought have become outdated clichés which are no longer useful; nevertheless it requires an effort for us to confront the necessity of renewing these principles – and to acknowledge that some of them no longer are relevant. Today I believe that after the recent events in various communist countries and the new approaches being employed in the theoretical debate, the reticence to engage in this analysis and renewal is beginning to disappear.

After many years, during which it was difficult to voice criticism in various specific regions, or when for reasons of intellectual or political prudence those critical voices were silent, we must now guard against the danger of a complete swing in the opposite direction, resulting in a total rejection of historical socialism and failure to distinguish between the valid and the useless in the theories and experiences of the past. The responsibility of intellectuals on the left of the political spectrum is to subject our past heritage to a critical review which is as rigorous as possible. In this critique, however, we must avoid irresponsibly overstepping our role and thereby obliterating history or burying the principles on which humanity’s hopes of emancipation have rested.

For such reasons, before recalling some of the traditional elements of socialism which have fallen into disuse or those which have proven to be erroneous, we should recognise those thinkers who, from the middle of the eighteenth century, have contributed concepts, ideas and theories which have permitted the development of socialist thought. We should also recognise all those who through their efforts and their activity in support of the cause have participated, in the most diverse corners of the world, in the struggle for a better and more just society. Without them the world as we know it today would be a different place and, unquestionably, worse off. Those of us who have learned to engage in theoretical reflection and to work politically within the framework of cultures which date back thousands of years, know very well that we cannot comprehensively judge our predecessors without taking into consideration the specific circumstances of their era and context. With their errors and limitations, it must be recognised accordingly, that the socialist movement has per-
formed one of the functions which it intended to realise: to transform the world.

In the same way in which we are influenced by the circumstances and possibilities of the era in which we find ourselves, the fathers of socialism were similarly influenced by their era. It was distinguished by the great intellectual constructions of the positivists, by Kant and Hegel, with everything which they share in the sense of all-embracing and all-encompassing will. It is from this that socialism, especially Marxist theory, aspired to be a synthesising, unifying and all-embracing body of thought, and it is from here that this intention was translated in practice into a strong tendency toward simplification and dichotomy. But socialism did not arise only in an era dominated by confidence in the possibilities of constructing a scientifically accurate and definitive body of thought. It was also influenced by other elements derived from Judeo-Christian thought, and the revolutionary spirit of the age, imbued with a ‘finalist’ vision of history which projected an attitude of ‘salvation’ into all social and political action. This is the source of the mythification of revolution, of the ‘revolutionary movement’, as a hope for a complete catharsis from which it was thought that changes resulting in the salvation of humanity would be produced.

In spite of the declared intention of attempting to elaborate a scientific theory (stimulated – in turn – by the great impulses of science and technology), all of these elements were reflected in strong tendencies towards a theological vision of socialism, with its inevitable component of dogmatism, simplification and lack of critical thought. This was very evident in its post-Marxist line, and most extremely in Marxism-Leninism, Stalinism and Maoism. This quasi-religious conception of socialism, which deferred solutions for all evil to a final revolutionary catharsis, impregnated a large part of the debates on the left for many decades. In the realm of democratic socialism, even in the 1950s and 1960s, many radicals did not recognise the real possibility of achieving substantial improvements for workers through reforms conquered in harsh political and social battles. Rather, what was frequently analysed was whether those actions brought us closer to or farther from the great moment of the revolution. Today, when the decade of the 1980s has reached its conclusion, and when we are a mere eight years from the onset of a new century, the theoretical and practical bankruptcy of those mythical revolutions has at least foreclosed many interminable debates.

Such concepts of revolution were accompanied in turn by a bi-polar and unhistorical vision of social conflict. This gave rise to a theory of the sole revolutionary subject, according to which all positive value and all redeeming potential was provided by the proletariat as a permanent, rising, universal social class. Until the moment of the revolutionary breakthrough, this social class was continually impoverished by the dictatorship of the other class which possessed the means of production; an ever more concentrated and exploiting class which exercised domination through the organisation of the state, which was considered, therefore, to be an abominable apparatus of oppression which has to be either eliminated or overcome.

This mechanical and inflexible projection of concepts, some of which were accurate and correct at the specific moment in which they were initially formulated, produced an overwhelmingly strict and rigid body of thought and political practice. Some people were able to correct or adapt it over time, albeit with enormous difficulties, traumas and convolution. Others simply made it even more dogmatic and ritualistic. From different political and organisational concepts of socialism arose an interpretation of the theory of the sole revolutionary subject, with a more or less rigid and more or less permanent vision of the social conflict between classes, and the greater or lesser value given to individual freedoms. From a theoretical point of view it is possible to imagine that if Marx had written after Freud, in an intellectual context influenced by various of the more open and modern scientific concepts, his great capacity for synthesis and assimilation would have been translated into a significantly different theoretical influence over the socialism to come. Setting aside the feeling of loss which this reflection may provoke, it is evident that history neither repeats nor invents itself, and that as part of our era we must adhere to the established facts of history and be capable of learning from them and from the new viewpoints and possibilities of our time.

Historically, to pass from a view of class as the redeeming class to the concept of a ‘class party’ was a logical step. In this way, some of those who believed in the inevitability of a class party for salvation through revolution immediately inferred the necessity of a vanguard party structure. This, upon achieving power – normally by violent action – and to purify society, used the state and exercised a class dictatorship which in practice, in some countries, became a dictatorship.
of the vanguard, or in other words, a party dictatorship. This party dictatorship, owing to its
own dynamic and the more generalised influence of the authoritarian culture propagated in the
1930s, became nothing more than a mere dictatorship. This negative sequence of events,
denounced and predicted by Rosa Luxemburg in 1917, led to a perfectly obvious result from which
only some lucid communists such as Gramsci rightly distanced themselves.

On the other hand, the democratic socialism which originated in the common concept of the
class party, to the extent that it assumed free will and democratic procedures (as a form of organisational self-regulation and as a procedure for gaining access to and eventually preserving, power), evolved towards a concept of a broader based party of the masses capable of acquiring majority electoral support for the realisation of progressive political reforms through democratic and peaceful methods and procedures. In some cases, in turn, the concept of a party of the masses evolved towards more generic formulations ('popular party', 'interclass party' and 'the people's party'), with all of the repercussions which this implied in terms of the risks of non-attainment of the socialist project's sociological and political goals.

Nevertheless, what is certain is that, beyond its inadequacies and limitations, the social democratic vision made possible the democratic achievement of power by a large number of European socialist parties. This allowed a test of the possibilities offered by the utilisation of the state for the development of social and redistribution policies. Perhaps some people needed the arrival of the state fiscal crisis of the 1960s and the strong neo-conservative offensive against the welfare state of the 1980s in order to understand the full potential of reform and social change offered by this route. It was a historical error to believe that the state, as a structure, was exclusively an all-powerful and monolithic instrument at the service of a dominant class. It not only showed an insufficient capacity for imagination and analysis, but also reflected the scant development of a sociology of organisations in the period when these simplistic interpretations were made.

Organisations have ends and functions of their own which outstrip the interests of those who prompted their creation, partly because the different groups which use them have their own designs. For this reason the state, which was effectively an instrument at the service of the bourgeois class, gradually departed from performing this exclusive role in the democracies, thereby converting itself into an insurance agency for society's weakest sectors, an element of balance between regions and an integrating factor for the defence of collective interests. For the same reason, the vanguard party created in order to effect the revolution for the working class ended up by devouring the revolution for its own benefit, as was critically noted by Djilas quite some years ago in his book *The New Class*. Likewise, out of the concept of a closed and static class there arose an ingenuous and evangelical egalitarianism which at times distorted both political discourse and the articulation of complex social and economic demands which can no longer be resolved by a simplistic, uniform, collectivist response.

DEMANDS FOR CHANGE AND THE NEW SOCIALISM

Today most people are conscious of the possibility of social change. We live in very dynamic societies which are on the verge of intense and profound transformation. This consciousness of change has become one of the fundamental points of reference for theoretical reflection and political practice. The first thing to be gleaned from a rapid review such as the one which I have just presented – in which many of us are engaged in one place or another – is that theorists and politicians are children of the limitations of the culture and knowledge of their time. Over time, economic, social, technological and political realities are modified and pose new and unexpected issues which require new and hitherto unthought of solutions. Proceeding as cautiously as is necessary, we must probe more deeply into the new realities which have appeared and into the new solutions which we are capable of offering. Accordingly, it is necessary to begin by asking ourselves, with a minimal idea of the future, what can be understood by socialism today.

What socialism?

The socialism of the future neither starts from zero nor should be treated as *a priori* closed. Socialism is an emancipating ideal innate to the historical process, which influences, and is influenced by, the particular circumstances of specific social events. As I have pointed out, historical
has formulations and forecasts for everything. In our time we know that absolute formulations end up by distorting social mechanisms and prevailing not only over the demands of reality but also over human and societal needs themselves. The socialism of the future must be treated as something which is totally different from a dogma or pseudo-religion; it cannot be a catechism of formulations which must necessarily be believed or disbelieved in a non-rational and non-thinking way.

Socialism is a driving force, an ideal which has been developed and formulated through history on the basis of theoretical reflection and specific experiences. Socialism does not pretend to lay out an a priori cliché, a totally finished design of the type of society to which we should aspire. Rather, socialism is the process of developing and relating some emancipatory ideals to specific societies in determinate historical moments. It is in this sense that it can be said that socialism is not a totus which can be definitively conquered in a determinate moment as the culmination and conclusion of history, but a basic element of social dynamics. It can be posited within a perspective and approach which aspire to a progressive perfection of human communities, while recognising that this is something which will never be totally achieved.

Hence, in order to progress in the construction of socialism as an emancipatory ideal and as a guide for specific forms of social organisation, we need new approaches through which it will be feasible to overcome given deficiencies, contradictions, alliances, domination, sources of misery and social malaise. It is these which foreclose the possibilities of a given society’s free, equal and common progress within a determinate historical perspective. The socialism of the future, therefore, must be constructed on the basis of completely free and unprejudiced debate. It is a task of theoretical-practical elaboration in which very close and direct collaboration between intellectuals and politicians will be necessary. What we need at this moment in order to make progress is not a narrow repertory of a posteriori justifications of political practice, nor abstract philosophical reflection unrelated to reality, but rather a theoretical guide for political practice in the coming years.

The horizon of the society of the future

From the present perspective it is difficult to foresee accurately the manner in which societies of the future, in all their intricacy, will be structured. However, it is now becoming generally accepted that we are on the verge of very important changes, in all respects, which are going to affect fundamentally basic features of the organisation of our societies. Some social theorists have gone so far as to suggest that the changes awaiting us are more important than those entailed in the transition from the traditional agrarian society to the modern industrial society.

We are still in the initial stages of many of these processes of change, and the new profiles of future society will take some time to appear clearly. However, it is already possible to identify some of the main directions of change. Important changes can be foreseen on a short- and medium-term basis in the nature and the role of employment (which will be less manual, with evolution away from a work-oriented civilisation to a leisure-oriented one); in social classes (with the emergence of new sectors and an accelerated loss of social and economic weight of others); in the power structure (which will be ever more transnational, anonymous and influenced by new cultural and technological elements); in social relations (which will be ‘micro’ focused and less formalised, and will promote new social identities), on the international map (with a redefinition of political space, and very important diverse economic and political changes which are already in evidence).

Faced with this accumulation of social change and new situations, it is logical to think that the nature of social conflicts in future societies will be significantly different from those which took place during the initial stages of the development of capitalist industrialised society. It is therefore essential for socialism to be able to foresee with sufficient clarity the most prevalent type of conflicts, problems, social and cultural deficiencies, etc., which are going to be produced in the new types of technologically advanced societies that are now emerging.

From a very general point of view the elements of conflict and social breakdown will tend to be very diverse, which is no less than can be expected to occur in very complex societies which are undergoing an intense process of change. Interpersonal inequalities will be accentuated, inequalities with regard to age (youth with fewer opportunities of employment; retired people with scant pensions . . .), sex (persistence of elements of discrimination against women), or culture and education (which give rise to very different social opportunities). National differences in standards
of living – and expectations – are, and will be, extraordinarily unequal between people from different parts of the planet.

The complexity of these new situations demands a vigorous effort toward determining what social demands and necessities are going to be posed in the immediate future. In this sense we must begin with personal demands. What are citizens of these societies of the future basically going to want? A brand of socialism developed without considering the personal demands which citizens of these advanced industrial societies are going to pose – have already posed – will have slight chance of success. For this reason we must be willing to dedicate priority attention to reflection on this question. For the time being, and by greatly simplifying, we can say that the first personal demand will be – as it already is – a standard of well-being, a level of availability of material resources (housing, consumer goods, income, etc.) and a degree of access to education, culture and health care which make up the image of an attainable standard of living for a population at any given moment. This average standard of living constitutes not only a reflection of what in reality is occurring, but is also an ‘aspiration’, a socially established reference model. It is reflected in public opinion and transmitted by the media. And it can therefore give rise to frustrations and an awareness of limitations among those citizens who do not achieve the standard of a particular historical era.

Accompanying it will be a strong personal demand for security. This will tend to become even more important when minimal subsistence levels are assured, and will acquire special scope in societies experiencing intense change, with all the associated elements of tension and uncertainty. These demands for security will include citizenship rights (such as recognition of individual rights and personal protection), security of status and social recognition (in a perspective of equity and equal treatment and opportunities), employment security (as a social activity and/or as a means of subsistence), security against disasters and illness (such as a guarantee of a healthier existence and higher quality of life) and security against large collective risks (wars, catastrophes, etc.) among which ecological elements will tend to acquire growing importance as a personal demand for healthier environmental living conditions.

Secondly, it is necessary to delve more deeply into the manner in which collective or group demands and needs are going to evolve. This not only means social classes of an economic nature, as we have traditionally understood them (which struggle to achieve greater social power and participation in benefits), but also new and diverse groups of special economic or social interests which at times are backed by significantly organised economic or institutional pressure groups, corporate organisations, consumers, neighbourhood associations and the like. And, above all, special attention will have to be given to the demands of those sectors which are the least educated and trained and which to a large extent suffer – or may suffer – social isolation, deprivation and subordination, as occurs with many groups which are socially deprived and generally situated outside the logic of the market. Some sociologists have begun to categorise as an 'under-class' those whose social position is basically defined – as are their needs – by cultural and personal factors (level of education, age, sex, etc.).

Thirdly, a socialist perspective of the future cannot overlook the necessities of the social system as a whole, especially in societies in which the free working of the market on classical lines does not in fact guarantee balanced or sustained economic growth, but risks divisions, imbalance and severe social, personal and environmental risks and costs. This is why, in the new societies which are now evolving, the issues of social inequality which result from the difficulty of offering dignified and safe jobs for all, of guaranteeing basic environmental balance and of assuring the availability of sufficient natural resources for future generations, have become fundamental benchmarks for a socialist project for the future. This clearly contrasts with the improvisation and tensions which the neo-conservative perspective introduces into social change under the banner of unrestrained market forces and non-collective ultra-individualism.

Using as a starting point this understanding of the complexity of society and our capacity to offer alternatives which provide integrated responses to the different social demands and necessities, socialism can guarantee the future of a society in which the maximum possibilities of material well-being can be achieved without jeopardising collective environmental balance or fundamental values and human rights.

The socialism of the future

Naturally, understanding the socialism of the future must be the result of the multiple debates
which are currently underway. We have before us, without doubt, some profound debates which are laden with nuances. It is still too early to foresee the final result while the discussion and reflection remain open. My conviction is that we are going to shape progressively the features of this socialism of the future as demanded by present circumstances, and will gradually establish them in an open manner, dialectically, by engaging in a rigorous and imaginative effort to relate theory to practice. However, the socialism of the future should not be considered by us as the starting point of a new journey, nor as an absolute new reality to be imagined by rendering the past a tabula rasa. As I have already emphasised, the socialism of the future is rooted in the long historical course of human and social progress. After all, it is a project which we should approach from the perspective of the achievements of the social and redistributive policies of the past decades.

Once democratic forms of human cooperation have been established in a majority of the Western societies around us, and certain levels of economic growth have been achieved which assure the given minimum standards which are vital for the majority of the population, the basic role of socialism should be oriented towards eliminating all remnants of domination, whether this be economic, political, cultural or ethnic in nature. This means the emancipation of humankind through the following means:

- the furtherance and extension of democratic practices and procedures in the different areas of social life, thereby making possible effective participation of citizens in public life and the progressive improvement of the mechanisms of collective self-government;
- equality and the diffusion of culture and education which embodies the profound meaning of liberty;
- an increase in social time and space which permits personal exercise and enjoyment of one’s own creative human capacities, as well as the development of a healthier and more gratifying existence;
- overcoming conditions which produce the social alienation and poverty in which many sectors of the population live;
- creation of the conditions for social balance and harmony which guarantee a progressive qualitative and quantitative improvement of people’s standard of living, and similarly assure both dignified social standards for all people and adequate stability of democratic political systems;
- peace through an international equilibrium, which can both give security and divert resources used from the production of arms towards investments which guarantee our well-being and protection of the environment.

Without doubt, in certain parts of the world there are at present adequate conditions to permit the development of socialism in this direction. But the socialism of the future cannot be treated merely as a formula for progress and welfare for the planet’s wealthiest and most privileged nations. Without solidarity one cannot truly speak of socialism. Therefore the socialism of that minority of the world’s developed nations must exert itself, in turn, to achieving the evolution of those countries, consistent with the goals which we have just set forth, and at the same time work for the creation of international conditions which permit the development of an effective and efficient policy of solidarity and the redress of international dependency and injustice.

In our era we well know how the original socialist formulations of an unspecific and rhetorical internationalism were translated into reality. We also know the limitations and problems – growing over time – from the experiences of national socialisms. And, above all, we know well the irrationality and aberrations which the concept of ‘socialism in one country’ produced, which was rhetorically alluded to as the ‘patriarchy of socialism’. The idea of a ‘ghetto’ or a ‘paradise for the privileged’ is incompatible with the core aspirations of socialism. The key question today is determining how we can work efficiently – and not in a merely rhetorical manner – towards the development of solidarity in international policies which are consistent with socialism.

The nature of international inequalities, coupled with cultural, political and geographical diversity, makes it very difficult to formulate socialist options and approaches which are valid – and applicable – for all countries. We have to start from the complexity of international reality and not allow ourselves to fall once again into the trap of making mere proclamations and rhetorical international declarations which promise nothing and fail to resolve anything. For economic, technological and cultural reasons, the socialism of the future must establish itself as a feasible project in given regions and countries. But, likewise, it must create the conditions to make this an effective and
practical project internationally. What this amounts to is achieving a new political hegemony for international solidarity. Drawing on its own experience, European socialism should actively undertake the development both of arguments and organisations which can achieve this aim. This means mobilising European capacity in the service of international solidarity and development cooperation, based neither on expansionist projects nor on the establishment or maintenance of any form of dependency or domination. Could we manage such an approach and such a project? Can we equip ourselves with the new organisational structures which new situations demand? Will we receive sufficient support from the prosperous and, in many respects, uncommitted sections of European society? With what initiatives and social support will it be possible to construct and promote advancement of the socialism of the future?

Historically, socialism was promoted fundamentally by the rising working class in traditional industrialised societies. Now, however, with automation of the workplace it is necessary to ask oneself frankly who is going to make up the social majority for the development, by peaceful and democratic methods, of the socialist project for the future. Could the socialism of the future be treated as a mere ideological project without specific social followers or adherents? It is still too early to resolve all these questions. But what is clear today is that we have to understand that the socialism of the future must of necessity have a broader-based and more diversified social support than it has traditionally had. Special attention must be paid to the capacity of groups without employment or work, such as the ‘underclass’ and the new social movements. These themselves represent a new social and political awareness stemming from significant problems in contemporary society (difficulties for youth employment, new forms of isolation, environment problems, women’s lack of equality, etc.).

Contrary to what many may think, socialism can find a new impetus in these social circumstances if it is capable of adding to its traditional bases of support the aspiration for change of other social groups whose political awareness is not defined by the work process or the terms of their employment. It is this perspective which will enable the socialism of the future to be a project with majority support, capable both of strengthening itself and contributing in a peaceful way to the development of democratic practice.

CONCLUSIONS

Socialism today is the central factor for the aspirations of human emancipation and social progress. The ideals of socialism embody the strongest desires for civilised progress towards forms of social life which are more firmly and coherently based on the criteria of liberty, equality, harmony and social balance. Likewise, today, the socialist ideal is an emancipating force for those social groups which have not achieved basic individual and social rights, nor have benefited from the possibilities permitted by scientific and technical progress. At the same time, the socialist ideal is fundamental for the overall consciousness of the planet’s social equilibrium and environmental needs. For such reasons the socialism of the coming decades must be constructed on the foundation of specific demands of given groups, but also based on an awareness of future needs.

Socialism is basically a project for the future. The project can – and should – guarantee a future suffused with hopes for the progress of human civilisation. This must be the guiding principle of specific theoretical and political actions. If we consider with sufficient historical perspective, and with a sufficiently broad theory, the current balance sheet which socialism can present we should agree that we have achieved sufficient maturity to confront a new stage in the development of its emancipating ideal. When one analyses what has happened in the industrialised world in the last century, one can say that in the long run socialism has won the moral and political battle over the economic and social model which the great theorists of capitalism expounded. In reality no one today dares to defend the moral hypotheses upon which these theorists and practitioners of laissez-faire and pre-social capitalism based their ideas. Even the most recalcitrant neo-conservative theorists of our time are convinced of the impracticality of such a social model. Not least, the globalisation of information, with its immediacy and closeness, strengthens moral consciousness and rejects the most repulsive and obvious forms of inequality, oppression, exploitation and social injustice.

It is for such reasons that we can consider that the original version of capitalism, which exalted uninhibited, unrestrained competition and which placed a priority upon the value of ‘things’ (merchandise) over persons, has been defeated on both moral and practical grounds. Politically this defeat is most evident in the social, employment and economic achievements of labour and of the
Socialism can confront the future from a perspective of clear optimism. We can face the next decade not only on the basis of achievements and awareness of the mobilising capacity of our ideals, but also on the basis of our capacity for learning. The difference between a living and dynamic ideal and a fossilised doctrine is the capacity for self-renewal on the basis of practical experience. Socialists have without doubt learned much from the experiences of the past decade. Socialism, in the broadest sense of the word, has accumulated an impressive array of experiences. And in our time we are witnessing precisely the gathering of this vast crop of experiences. To a certain extent it seems as if social democrats, communists and other political groups on the left coincide in acknowledging that the time has come to evaluate the results thereof through an adequate sieve which permits us to separate the grain from the chaff. This certainly may be the crowning greatness of socialism as an emancipatory ideal: its capacity for renovation and adaptation to the new times and new realities, from the accumulation of experience and from the dynamism of social action.

For this reason, we have before us a great challenge and tremendous historical and political responsibility. Our responsibility consists of nothing less than being capable of contributing positively to the construction of the socialism of the future, starting from socialism’s past and present. Intellectuals and politicians must ensure that the theoretical elaborations on the socialism of the future precede the political practice of our times, performing not only the task of critical evaluation of the past, and analysis of the limitations of historical theory and practice, but also opening new roads, designing new objectives and exploring more deeply; in short, pursuing the great goals of transformation which are appropriate to socialist ideals. Socialism is an ideal and a social movement not only capable of arising from its ashes, but which finds its force and impetus precisely in its own crises. Socialism is embodied in experiences and theoretical reflection. We should not therefore be troubled because, in its broadest expression, it is at present living through a critical stage, of review, analysis and debate. The willingness to confront this crisis openly and without resort to dogma is the best guarantee that we shall emerge greatly invigorated from the debates in which we are now engaged.

Socialism as understood by us today has been developed throughout the last two centuries in different well-defined stages. The first ‘initial stage’ was clearly linked to the ideals of the enlightenment and to the spirit which both inspired the French Revolution and culminated in the democratic revolutions of our age. However, in reality, socialism took shape and acquired specific features in a second ‘theorising stage’, in which the greatest social thinkers of the past century gave historical perspective and identity to the desires and needs of the social groups which were enduring the mutilating consequences of the capitalist industrial revolution. A third ‘practical stage’ in the development of socialism started in the period before the First World War, when the movement became organised in various different ways. Socialism ceased to be a mere ideal, a mere theoretical reference, and began to engage in practical political action. As we all know, this stage gave rise to a period of intense debates and significant divisions which in a way revealed the shortcomings and lapses of some of its previous theoretical endeavours. Certainly, the new stage showed its own strong theoretical push. But what this involved, to a large extent, was partial a posteriori justification of specific political practice, especially Leninism and social democracy.

The theoretical debate in the period following the phase of the great founding fathers of socialism was extraordinary. But it was dominated by what was done and said in certain countries (essentially Russia and Germany) during a particular period and under specific conditions which, in reality,
could be repeated or extrapolated only with great difficulty. The result was that the theoretical
debate of this third stage of socialism tended to be
distorted as well as used for specific political ends
by its exponents. Overall, it can be said that the
flame still burns from the first stage of socialism,
and the impetus which it generated. Likewise, we
have inherited an important framework of theoretical
concepts and ideas from the second stage.
What remains from the third stage – and will stay
in the history books – is a collective body of practical
experience from which we should be able to
draw appropriate lessons. Today it is vital to ask
ourselves to what extent the theory which pre­served
the flame of the initial impulse, and which
served to mobilise and inspire broad social groups
in the search for actual political experience, still
retains practical relevance or is able to generate
enthusiasm and guide current action.

In reality, a look at the world around us is
sufficient to show that some traditional theoretical
perspectives of socialism are no longer capable of
performing this role. It is for this reason that in
our times a new stage is being opened in the
history of socialism. And this fourth stage must
necessarily be a 'new theorising stage' capable of
gaining a new momentum and shaping new prac­tical developments in socialism. Our advantage at
this time – to allude to the famous case of Newton
– is that socialists today also have the possibility
of looking further 'because we stand ourselves on
the shoulders of giants'. Likewise today, we are
able to enhance our perspective for the future on
the twin bases of the theoretical contributions of
the classic creators of socialist thought and the
lessons drawn from a broad base of practical
experience over time. As socialists, we can say
that in setting new courses of action, we not only
know that we are already underway, but also that
we are ready to benefit from historical experience
which shows the consequences of travelling – or
not travelling – down one road or another. In
short, when an old era ends and a new stage of
great scientific and social possibilities opens on
the horizon, the moment has arrived to build
openly a renewed socialism for the future on the
foundation of historic socialism. Socialism for new
generations and for new times. That is our task.

Note
1. Annual meetings concerning the future of socialism
organised by the Fundación Sistema in Javea (Alicante, Spain).
SOCIALISM AND THE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
Oskar Lafontaine

It is not by mere chance that I, a German social democrat, am dealing with this topic. We Germans live with a historic contradiction of our own. Our history has been full, perhaps more than that of any other nation, of great social movements – even in the Federal Republic's most recent history, social movements have played a much more important role than in other Western European countries. But at the same time, and although this is something which no longer occurs in the Federal Republic, nowhere have these movements been as feared, or repressed so frequently, as in Germany.

Two souls, thus, within the German breast: one which yearns for order, peace and quiet; the other, which demands 'movement'. One is not surprised then by the fact that it was precisely Germany which produced the first great theorists of the social movement – of whom Marx was only one. A century and a half ago, in the introduction to his 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', he wrote that German history is inspired by a movement – the word 'movement' certainly has a different meaning here, being a movement 'which no nation in all of history has imitated or will imitate. That is to say, that we have shared the restorations of the modern nations without sharing their revolutions. We have been restored, first of all, because other nations began a revolution and, secondly, because other nations underwent a counter-revolution; the first time, due to the fact that our leaders were afraid and, secondly, because our leaders were not afraid in the least. We, being led by our pastors, find ourselves only once to be part of a free society: on the day of its funeral.'

Although this assessment of the situation was once correct, it certainly no longer holds true for the Federal Republic. The freedom given to social movements today is not any less than that existing in other Western democracies. It has been possible for a political culture to develop and become a breeding ground for demands for participation on the part of its citizens. But wariness of social movements both inside and outside the Federal Republic has continued to be great, and the more 'German' the movement, the greater this wariness becomes. There are good reasons for this. It was not so long ago in Germany that it was possible for a social movement to be organised and imposed more effectively than in any other nation, this being a perverted movement, whose purpose was to put an end to all social movements under a millenarian Reich: National Socialism.

When reflecting upon new social movements, one must not neglect to take the old ones into consideration. In this sense, even National Socialism is relevant as historical evidence that fascist violence, wherever it has come to power, has first begun as a small social movement. This has
imposed a heavy burden on all later social movements in the form of an inherited mistrust. Critics at home and abroad of the new social movements in the Federal Republic – both rightists and leftists – have missed almost no opportunity to spread their criticism, alluding openly or cryptically to National Socialism. In the light of German history, in which we have not figured as a cradle for freedom, this mistrust is understandable. Nonetheless, Germany has not contributed less to the initiation of the new social movements – above all in the case of the West German peace movement – even though its opponents have voiced fierce criticism. The vast majority of the supporters of this movement did not wish to relinquish their responsibilities for the defence of the freedom of West Germany, but to demonstrate that all fights become absurd when the means employed lead to the inevitable destruction of all. The principle of the defence of freedom, democracy and human rights are not under debate, but rather the suitability of the means employed.

Even though I have begun with this theme in the country I know best, I will nevertheless attempt to analyse the new movements not solely from the viewpoint of the Federal Republic of Germany. The essential characteristics which the different ‘new’ regional or national movements in Western Europe have in common are so evident that the majority of the statements made regarding any one of these movements is more or less applicable to the others. It would be much more problematic to compare them with the social movements in Eastern Europe or in countries outside of Europe including the United States, where the traditional, cultural, political, economic or social conditions are different. Thus, I would like to leave these movements aside, even where their content or ways of taking action appear to coincide with the ‘new’ German movements. Neither the democratisation movement in China, nor the human rights movement in the Czechoslovak Republic can be judged in the same way as one would judge the ‘new’ social movements in Western Europe.

Also, I am presenting my arguments as a politician, not as a scientist. In other words, I am subjective in my judgements. I also want to avoid an ideological debate. As I am not a sociologist, I cannot be expected to provide an analysis of socialism or of the new social movements according to scientific principles. I would like to focus my statements on the political relationship between social democracy and the new movements. For these reasons, I can deal only superficially with the internal sociological structures of these movements and can hardly consider how each of them has evolved over time. From the viewpoint of my topic, I am mainly interested in the common denominator which can be found among the forms and specific contents of the new social movements.

Does any common denominator really exist? Can the new alternative movements and the new peace movements all be included under the same heading? What is it that links the new environmentalist movement to the new feminist movement? The new movements have something in common that their outward forms. Movements based on the most diverse ideologies are comparable with one another because there are analogous attitudes of thought and protest. Naturally, each movement possesses its own individual features, especially the feminist movement, whose demands concern both specific conditions and the general principle of equality. But this movement, in all its diversity, undoubtedly, can also be included within a new type of social movement.

Following the disintegration of the student protest movement of the 1960s, social protest dispersed either into dogmatic political groups of little importance, or into spontaneous circles on the New Left, into housing communities, into alternative projects, into groups carrying out their own experimental efforts, and those providing aid to Third World countries. Another considerable part of extra-parliamentary opposition was formed from those who, with an initial reformist zeal, passed from the student movement into the traditional parties of the working class, later returning to enter institutionalised politics. But already in the early 1970s, the first initiatives of citizen participatory groups, as well as the feminist movement, were beginning to be seen. Still it was impossible to appreciate that this diffused situation would give rise to a widespread wave of protest movements, which took as their reference point for protest, not the capitalist system, but the question of social reproduction. Only when confronted with the oil crisis of 1973 were people more widely aware of the ecological problems resulting from industrial growth, the progressive destruction of natural and social living space, or the growing risks and dangers of the new, great technologies. This new awareness regarding limits to growth, the deterioration of the environment, and restrictions of technology was the true breeding-ground for a counter-cultural protest which mobilised the social movements in a new way.

By the late 1970s, protest was everywhere – protest against industrialism, against patriarchy,
against militarism and the arms race, against the state, against technology, against progress and also against socialism. With regard to the new social movements, it seems that André Glucksman is right, at least this time, when he speaks of a negative humanism and understands this as meaning that human beings no longer define themselves on a positive image of their human essence, but on the marking of boundaries separating them from the inhuman, from catastrophe. It also seems to me that the new movements – except the feminist movement – are too limited and exclusive in their protest. They are countermovements, that is to say, movements not motivated by the fight for human rights, but by the protest against the violation of human rights; not by the fight for racial equality, but by the protest against apartheid; not by the effort to achieve a clean environment, but by the protest against the pollution of the environment. This difference is no mere sophism. I mean by this that the new movements are typical of a mature society in which freedom and well-being no longer need to be won through fighting for them; it suffices to maintain them. Speaking in favour of this interpretation is the fact that the educated new middle class are the ones heralding the new social movements.

However, a counter-cultural protest was also central to the first social movements. Weren’t these also interpreted at first as being ‘anti’ movements – anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, anti-middle-class or any other ‘anti’? So are the ‘new’ movements really so new?

The ‘social movement’ started some 150 years ago as a labour movement. That is to say, the concept was first applied to a movement which provided a socialist answer to the ‘social question’. In the twentieth century, the social movements of the 1970s and 1980s were interpreted as being new as compared to the traditional, institutionalised forms of the labour movement – the trade unions and the parties of the left. Does this also mean a break with socialist ideals and ideas of the ‘old’ labour movement? I would like to analyse this question.

Unlike the ‘new’ movements, the student protest movement of 1968 followed entirely the same ideological lines as the socialist labour movement although it had already adopted the methods used in the fight waged by other movements imported from America, with unconventional forms of civil disobedience – ranging from fantastic demonstrations, to provocative sit-ins or happenings, to the limited violations of regulations. The anti-authoritarian protest of the 1970s now also developed the autonomous, decentralised, network structure of the new social movements. Politically the student movement conceived itself as being an extra-parliamentary, rather than an anti-parliamentary, opposition. That its protest did not take institutionalised form was due above all to the fact that it did not have institutions at its disposal. It should not be misinterpreted as opposition to the institutionalisation of politics. Indeed, Rudi Dutschke proclaimed ‘the long march through the institutions’. Many of those taking part in the movement of 1968 took that road and have become, in turn, part of these institutions. Not long ago, even Daniel Cohn-Bendit became a councillor for cultural affairs in Frankfurt. Nonetheless, the political principles of the new social movements were profoundly anti-institutional and impregnated with a deep mistrust of the capacity of institutionalised politics to solve real problems. From a historical point of view, this anti-institutional position is nothing new. These ways of thinking and feeling were typical of the great anarchist or union trend within the European labour movement.

Given that by definition all social movements share the similarity that they are to some extent extra- or anti-institutional, these new movements were marked by the distance they kept from the political institutions. Of course, a new movement could break with the institutional forms of the preceding movement and still seek the same fundamental objectives. Indeed, the old labour movement, in order to regain its relevance, will have to break with the petrified forms of organisation that characterise it today. While it was a relevant movement it maintained its loyalty to its extra-institutional form, keeping its distance – no less carefully than the new movements of today – in respect to the institution of the state, and placing no less importance on its autonomy – a proletarian autonomy as opposed to middle-class politics – and did not refrain from showing its support for participation and unconventional action. These same aspirations – solidarity, choice and the unfulfilled desire for productive relations freed from domination – which inspired the old cooperatives and self-help workers’ movements, now give inspiration to the new alternative movements. If the key issues differ in some form from those posed in earlier times, it is not because the social aspirations have altered in the minds of workers, but because over the space of a century there have been considerable social changes.

Social movements are the gauges of social
change. Because, while the masses bring on social change independently, they do so through social movements. But movement also means participation. People are not objects but the subjects of history. They directly influence social change. They are not simply sounding boards for the political activity of a select minority which heads the state. This does not make social movements democratic as such, nor does it make them synonymous with the forces of progress – as was believed by the 'old' labour movement. In its irrepressible push forward the socialist labour movement overlooked the fact that it is possible to go backward just as easily. Later on, fascism would open the eyes of the movement to this truth.

No one would say that social movements are not democratic. On the contrary. Their aversion to institutionalised politics is rooted in their desire for a more direct, more radical democracy. Consequently, they are organised 'democratically into grassroots divisions'. Undoubtedly, this democratic grassroots organisation is not, in any way, as new as it is sometimes claimed to be, but this is also a part of the ideological constant of 'traditional' leftist radicalism. Take the initial struggles of the labour movement during the time of the Paris Commune: an anecdote, though possibly not completely true, tells a great deal more about the democratic grassroots nature of movements than any cut and dried scientific analysis. There is, for example, the splendid story of the simple, small-town man who falls asleep in the City Hall as a private citizen and wakes up as the Mayor. This honourable man was supposed to say a few words regarding a commonplace business matter at the City Hall in Paris on 18 March 1871, but when he arrived he found that there was no one in the building. The public officials staffing the building had fled the revolt. In his search for someone to help him, the poor devil wandered from room to room until he finally came to the Mayor's office. He must have felt quite at home there because those who had occupied the building found him asleep in the Mayor's chair. These participants in the Commune interpreted this as being a sign and they elected the bewildered man as the new Mayor without further ado. Of course, this grassroots democracy fairy tale was not long-lived as it immediately became evident that the new Mayor was not able to do his job, given that he did not know how to read or write.

I am not telling you anything that you do not already know when I point out in this way that Karl Marx considered the Paris Commune to be a model revolutionary socialist society. And all those who later attempted to re-create socialist theory, in its true spirit, or to put it into practice, have followed this radical democratic guide. Rosa Luxemburg, for example, could only imagine the socialist society as an order born out of the revolutionary, unbridled, free spontaneity of mass movements. Karl Liebknecht did not think very differently. He was the great hero and martyr acclaimed by the masses of that great twentieth-century German peace movement which began towards the end of 1914 with 1000 striking workers and – growing non-stop – reached its high-point at the beginning of 1918 with 1.5 million strikers. In 1917, in prison, Liebknecht penned phrases that are every bit as radically democratic as the grassroots democratic 'creed' of the 'new' social movements. I would like to quote only one of these phrases: 'To reach the masses, and each individual, moral and spiritual independence; scepticism of authority; initiative in decision-making, and a free, natural aptitude and ability to take action is, above all, the sole sure basis for the progress of a labour movement capable of rising to meet the challenge of its mission in history, in addition to being the essential prerequisite for eradicating the peril of bureaucracy.'

In the leftist radical criticism of the 'bureaucratic' degeneration of socialism, the anti-institutionalism of the 'new' social movements was already evident. The new movements attempt to interpret the problems differently and to demonstrate alternative means of socialisation. The left-wing socialists and the communists of the 'Councils' had tried to do the same. The 'new' movements rebelled against the levelling, anonymity and devaluation of the individual in a society shaped by technology. The anarchists had done the same before them. As the different radical leftist movements had done in the past, so now the 'new' movements sought to counter the dominant structures of daily, institutionalised ways of acting and thinking. This is nothing other than what Trotsky was considering when he made the appeal for permanent revolution.

Although this 'new' anti-institutionalism essentially follows the same direction as the old – challenging open or concealed institutional dominance – the value of its political and social position has certainly changed. That is to say that, as institutionalised ways of acting and perceiving changed, so the alternative patterns of action and the cultural focus of the new social movements also changed away from traditional models of leftist radicalism. The attempt to shed old ties and...
bound to systematic and complex organisation of marketing of lifestyles, and the lack of opportunities for self-creation as a consequence of being bound to systematic and complex organisation of a 'state security' type of social life. Modern society not only shows such trends limiting individual freedom, but it is also characterised simultaneously by a series of diametrically opposed procedures: a progressive trend towards both individualisation and pluralisation. This is shown in the structural changes in the labour world – a tendency that is reflected in the individual's desire for self-fulfilment. It is expressed in the protest against the rules and the authoritarian structures of traditional society, in the search for new social forms which give people a sense of identity, as well as in the growth of a wide variety of subcultural lifestyles.

The protest of the new social movements against a computerised, controlled society, against police states, and against 'nuclear states', denotes the new battle lines between the growing need for self-determination as human beings, on the one hand, and the pressures for systematic management, technocratic regulation and social control on the other. It is no longer the given and structured social conditions of existence, but a concern with specific areas of that existence which now forms the nucleus of the new social movements. Democratic socialism would be doomed to fail if it were not to take these concerns seriously and take them into account in its strategies. I do not believe that I need stress which trends must be supported by social democrats and which must be countered. In the struggle to broaden the possibilities for individual and social self-determination, the socialists and the new movements are natural allies. With social change, the focal crystallisation points of the new movements have shifted position. Both modern and traditional issues – be they the emancipation of women, the democratisation of society, the future of labour, or keeping the peace – come to light differently under different social conditions. New topics, not taken into account previously, are being added; above all, the ecological threat to humanity itself.

In my opinion, it would be an error to classify a movement as being new only because it provides another right answer to an old problem which is now manifesting itself in a different way. But the 'old' institutionalised socialism must express its answers in keeping with the times if it does not want to become an anachronism. Perhaps, in this sense, we should be speaking of a 'new' socialism. But what is the attitude of such a new socialism regarding the environment? The issue itself is new, given that it has been recently 'discovered'. Likewise, the environmentalist movement is a new movement – and different from the movements with a traditional ideology, such as feminism, democratisation, or the peace movement. Environmentalism is an entirely new type of movement. In regard to its ways of thinking and acting, it possesses its own specific dynamic, and attracts an equally new type of opposition directed against an irrational economic conservatism put forward, not only by the capitalist, but also by the socialist administrations. Both the capitalist desire, already analysed by Marx, to obtain maximum profits and accumulation, and the socialist desire to increase industrial growth by developing all the productive forces in order to ensure the welfare of all, have now been shown to pose a threat to human existence. For the socialist movement, the fundamental contradiction between capital and labour was the cornerstone of private accumulation. The protest of the new environment movement has been fired by the no less fundamental contradiction between the progress of the productive forces and deterioration of the environment. For socialists the issues concern distribution and ownership of the means of production; for environmentalists it is a matter of a change in consumption aimed at avoiding annihilation through excess production. From this standpoint, social power structures are regarded by the new movements not so much in class terms as in technocratic-instrumental terms. I do not conceal the fact that I consider this to be an appropriate order of priorities for a present-day society at risk. But I would also add that social democrats must not neglect the problems of social class. The demand for greater social justice is an inalienable part of socialism. For the old socialist movement, as for the new environmentalist movement, work continues to be a key concept, as work constitutes the prerequisite for all production and for all means of production. But it also produces technological and environmental risks.

In the light of the increasingly acute unemployment problem, a debate has broken out on the future of work, and in Germany and elsewhere the positions of the social democrats and the new movements have been brought closer together through this debate. In the draft of a new Social Democratic Party (SPD) statement of principles, work is defined, in the sense proposed by Hannah Arendt, as a meaningful social activity. In this sense, the concept of work has been broadened
The concept of work is not really new, that it has expanded the thesis that this new definition of the concept of work is not really new, that it has rather been taken from old socialist ideals, even from genuine Marxist ones, in which labour is no longer considered as a saleable commodity, but as a means by which people can fulfil their potential. However, within the framework of this paper, I cannot go into greater depth on this issue, to which André Gorz's latest book makes a very interesting contribution.

In general, it cannot be denied that the new social movements have affinities, at least in part, with earlier ones. The example of the new definition of work reveals that a parallel exists between social democracy and the new movements, and the discussions between them have not been limited only to work or the labour process. The disarmament proposals of the peace movement are now on the agenda of diplomatic negotiations and the defence concept of 'attack incapability', which is now a point in the German social democratic programme, was originally coined by the peace movement. For some time also, the trade unions have been referring to socially and environmentally compatible technologies; to alternative production, or company self-management in the factories threatened with closure. Without the pressure exerted by the feminist movement, no participation quota would have been agreed for women in the SPD. And it would have been difficult for the socialist parties to heed environmentalist reasoning if they had not been constantly subjected to strong pressure on the part of the environmentalist and anti-nuclear movements.

The new social movements are based on new thinking of a kind which became popular in the 1970s, when the environmental crisis became dramatically apparent. The optimism of unlimited progress, which the socialist labour movement had endorsed, pointed in fact to the destruction of a livable and sustainable environment. The concept of progress was being questioned, with large sections of the political left becoming pessimistic about the prospects for civilised life itself. If progress leads to destruction, then the thought which led to the idea of progress must be erroneous. Thus, the European enlightenment, along with its rationality – the thinking from which the left had been born – was now subject to question.

Evidently, the 'new' thought of the 'new' movements contains a rather conservative, neoromantic trait. (I am not using the word 'conservative' here with the negative connotations of political circles, but in the sense of preserving traditional values. I also expressly stress that I am not putting this 'looking back' under the same heading as 'going back', typical of fascist movements.) The democratic orientation, according to the old values, typical of the new movements, has nothing in common with the fascist 'terror' of returning to the past, any more than with the 'democratic' Stalinist terror. In comparison with social democracy, the new social movements suffer from the loss of their sense of utopia. They are not sustained by the general idea of a better order towards which society may progress. The ideologies of the new movements vary with the coming and going of new tendencies. What they foresee for the future is as limited as the issues motivating them, and they lack the tenacity which is nourished by a sense of utopia. Another reason for the limited inspiration of these movements 'based on one sole issue' is the fact that they do not address key questions which concern personal security, such as economic or social policy, or employment. Socialists, on the other hand, should not abandon the idea of progress, the belief in achieving better conditions, or what Ernst Bloch called the 'principle of hope'. Those who conceive social utopias as a guide for political action can have no hope without believing in the possibility of progress. Contrary to what is claimed by these new movements, social democracy must take a stand with regard to universal values.

But this should not mean that socialists, moving towards the future, should not stop once in a while and take a look back. Walter Benjamin recommended something of this sort in his philosophical-historical theses. Moments spent in self-reflection are a part of progress, especially in a society at risk. Criticism from the new movements has aided socialists in understanding that it will not be possible to reach the future with a naïve optimism of the 'hurrah, progress is on its way' type. Thus, the new movements have contributed decisively to the concept of the modernisation of society through insistence on democratic control.

An openly-flaunted anti-intellectualism is typical of the new social movements and, in comparison with the socialist movement, this is something new. A loss of a sense of utopia is associated with a loss of theory, and I see them as being related.
The student protest movement of 1968 introduced modes of action used by later movements, but within the framework of leftist socialist tradition, they strove to derive their political actions from a general base of social theory. Their expectations, based on a critical analysis of capitalism which they directed towards the working class, and those relegated to living on the fringe, in industrial society or the Third World, led them into error. Disenchantment led to theories becoming ossified into dogma, and the 1968 movement disintegrated into sects. But dogmas provide no answers for new problems. The theory of the New Left simultaneously lost its ability to interpret the experiences, the hopes and the fears of a new generation and to unite them under the banner of new utopias.

From this point of view, the break of the new social movements from the traditional labour movement was also a break which freed them from their ‘-isms’, be it Marxism, Leninism, Maoism or plain and simple socialism. This break also has its positive side. I need not explain how good it makes a social democrat feel when the adjective ‘revisionist’ is not considered to be an insult for the latest generation of leftists. The break with ‘-isms’ was to be expected, because it meant throwing ideological ballast overboard and interpreting reality more cogently. It was to be expected because socialism, especially in the East, was going from bad to worse, and its ossified dogmas were crumbling.

The ecological crisis made the weakness of socialist theory apparent. A new type of movement arose because the labour movement was not capable of solving its own crisis. New social movements spring up when serious problems cannot be solved by traditional politics. But this does not mean that socialists need be left bereft of theory. On the contrary, if the old left-wing socialist plan provides no further new results, this means that the time has come to create a new plan or programme which thrives on protest but is inspired by the utopia of a more just social order. This is the spirit which, in the past, made socialism more than simply a protest movement against capitalism. This is the spirit which today best symbolises the difference between social democracy and the new social movements.

At the end of the 1980s the communist systems were disintegrating due to the lack of freedom and democracy. Without a doubt, the socialist ideal could be harmed by this collapse, not least, if the fascination with capitalism were to increase. Thus, it is precisely now that the left needs a new socialist project for freedom which can oppose the bankruptcy of the planned economies of communism. This should provide a golden opportunity for the triumph of social democracy! In the midst of this general confusion, which political force will be capable of leading the left in formulating a project for the future? It is evident that social democracy should exploit all its efforts to this end. To be on the left means to act.

As I have stated, the new movements sprang up as a protest against the lack of action taking place in socialist circles – not so much as a protest against socialism per se, but rather as a protest against its presumed failure. It is not only the so-called ‘real’ but in effect ‘non-socialism’ of the East which has come to a standstill. Let us not deceive ourselves by comparing it with the prophesied socialist utopias, on the basis that socialism, wherever it has come to power, has not accomplished enough. It achieved its historic role as the opposition and won its greatest victories as the opposition. This is valid for the communists – it suffices to compare its merits in the democratic struggle against the fascist dictatorships with the miserable democracy that it established in its own domain. And this is no less true of social democrats. Their great historical merit, the socialist welfare state, was achieved by the labour movement in its struggle against the aims of capital; and I am deliberately stating that it was achieved by way of a struggle because the means required for it, be they strikes or mass protests, were those of an opposition rather than of those having to do with the art of governing.

I do not mean by this that the governments of the left which have been elected throughout this century in the parliamentary democracies of Western Europe have been either bad or useless. On the contrary, they were necessary to embody in legislation the objectives of socialist movements. Socialist and social democratic governments laid out what the labour movement had prepared. In Germany, for example, having gained the historic backing of the revolution in 1918, democracy needed the establishment of social democratic governmental authority. In 1969, following the euphoria of the reforms unleashed by those representing the events of 1968, social democracy came to power again. It was only at the beginning of the 1970s that some of the reforms for which the social movement had prepared the way, socially and politically, were provided with institutional guarantees.

I am certainly not one of those who underestimate the merits of the West German liberal-social
coalition governments of Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt. Nor am I reproaching particular individuals if I state here that somewhere along the way, the liberal-social coalition lost the reformist initiative which it had originally possessed. The entire SPD allowed its projects for reforms, and the links with the social movements which had initiated them, to be overlooked while it wasted its time dealing with state institutions. Nor do I wish to be misinterpreted on this point. I know all too well that it is necessary to deal with matters of urgent importance, and that socialist governments cannot ignore these matters. But according to socialist thought, governing must entail something more than just the administration of priorities. Included in this 'something more' are the initiatives which stem from the social movements.

Concentrating its efforts on the actions taken by the state, towards the end of the 1970s the SPD was not capable of reflecting the reform policies initiated by the new social movements in government or of providing the foundations for them. The result is well known: the weakening of the reformist movement by the split of the 'greens'. From then on, social democracy had only its state 'leg' to stand on, but when standing on only one leg it is very difficult to get anywhere at all. Yet for a socialist or social democratic party it should not be very difficult to reach out to social movements while being the party in power. Quite frequently, their members also take an active part in the movements. For example, it was the Social Democratic Party who turned the West German peace movement into a mass movement. The forerunners of the West German environmentalist movement — led by Erhard Eppler — were social democrats. Undoubtedly, the loss of political power made it easier for the SPD to participate in the new movements. It was not merely by chance that the West German protest movement reached its high point in 1983, following shortly after the conservative party's victory at the polls.

German social democracy will be able to carry out its tasks to the extent that it continues to be a movement itself. If it has stopped moving, it must start to move again. And it must not only be a movement in opposition. It must be able to maintain the difficult balance between state power and movement, even when it is in power. This means that as well as the administration of priority matters, it must also reflect those emancipating initiatives which stem from society, and put them into practice politically. This also means putting an end to traditional 'statism' in the Hegelian tradition, and instead promoting the liberation demanded by the labour movement.

The democratic nature of the future depends upon the degree to which citizens participate in the state, in the economy and in society. One of the lessons worth pointing out from what has happened in the communist world is that a state monopoly of responsibility, which incapacitates the individual, leads to a dead-end in the long term. Thus in the future the democratisation of responsibility will be of great importance, and the new social movements have played an essential role in this sense. They have broken down the monopoly of experts in the decision-making process and have turned the questions regarding future technology and its social control into the object of public political debate. Only in this way have real alternatives been posed.

Socialists must respond to such a challenge. The relationship between social democracy and the new social movements must go beyond a situation of peaceful coexistence between the two social forces on the political left: one aware of its power, the other defiant. We need a kind of symbiosis. I can only imagine socialism as being a movement. It must derive its political and spiritual drive from the plurality of other left social movements. But it also must protect itself against the constraints of 'single-issue' politics by formulating a wider project for society as a whole. In this way it will neither be a market trend, nor deprived of the sting of criticism, nor weakened.

The creative tension between real politics and protest, between responsibility and utopia, between the power of the state and the social movements must be sustained by the left in government. This is easier said than done. We need it to ensure that socialist governments, on the road to the future, do not end up being mere staging posts in history.
The expression 'unexplored areas' is familiar enough from cartography or mapping. In ancient times it was applied to the discovery of unknown continents, and more recently to areas whose precise features remained unknown. I am using the term in the present context because it makes it easier for me to express and answer a series of questions which I have been considering for some time, without any evident or obvious answers. The analytic background to my efforts to answer such questions is my own work over many years. The practical background is the fact that I gained the support of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) to promote a new International of Ideas embracing present-day socialist movements. This has already started in several European countries, and it is hoped that it may be extended outside Europe. The project, in order to succeed, needs not only to relate what exists, but also to promote fundamental re-thinking in key areas.

'Unexplored areas' can mean 'ignorance' – real or apparent, caused by silence maintained for different reasons, in relation to different aspects of reality – of the past. These would be the 'unexplored areas' of history. However, the term also has other meanings, and these are the ones which interest me here. There are many important questions. For example, there is the analysis of the social consequences of the current industrial revolution, their importance for socialism, and, in particular, the growth of structural unemployment and the gradual disappearance of the working class. These phenomena substantially modify the rules of the game in the socialist movement, its objectives and its actions. Another question concerns the attitude towards Marxism of those branches of the socialist movement (in the widest sense) which base their activities on Marxist theory and ideology, when reality threatens to liquidate the foundations on which Marxist social analysis is based: the gradual disappearance of the proletariat, of surplus value, of the conflict between classes, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and of many other elements. And what is the attitude to religion in a changing situation, given that religious movements frequently perform a revolutionary role and adhere consciously to socialism as a principle which they themselves support in their ideology as an objective of social development? There is also the question of mass movements which are objectively allies of the socialist movement, and which simply did not exist previously because there was no reason for them (as is the case with the ecology movement or the feminist movement).

What do we understand today by 'socialism'? Without a precise response to this question it will
be difficult – or impossible – to act in a conscious manner. It would also be very difficult to reflect on socialism in the future and to find solutions. The ‘unexplored areas’ can also be related to the future. In a clear sense the future, since it is unknown at present, is itself an ‘unexplored area’. But it is not a question of trying to prophesy what is to come. It is a question of making forecasts, and making them with scientific precision, taking as the starting point the facts as we know them today and their probable dynamics. We can therefore admit – guided by the knowledge that we have and rejecting the defensive mechanisms of cognitive dissonance – that the phenomenon of structural unemployment will continue to increase at an accelerating rate as a result of the revolution in the technology of production. There are two questions to be posed here: how to ensure a livelihood for those people deprived of work in the traditional sense of the word, and how to ensure that they can find new, socially useful, work in the future. Otherwise society would degenerate, with a pathology especially dangerous for the young. Another ‘unexplored area’ is already being discussed: the attitude of socialism towards private ownership of the means of production. Historically, the liquidation of such property, as a condition for the liquidation of the owning classes and the exploitation of man by man, was the foundation of socialism and the essence of its difference from capitalism. However, the history of ‘real socialism’ has taught us important lessons. It is not sufficient to liquidate private property in order to build a socialist regime in the widest sense of the word. It also does not guarantee the superiority of socialism over capitalism in the competition between the two systems.

The experience of 70 years of such rivalry is currently forcing the most obstinate dogmatists to retreat, and this has meant a return to a problem which was discussed at the end of the past century by Simmel, Max Weber and others: namely the relationship between the nationalisation and the socialisation of the means of production. On the other hand, technological advances have given a new life to the economic question contained in the expression ‘small is beautiful’ (Schumacher), which addresses in a new way the problem of private property in the sphere of production. But in that case what difference is there between socialism and capitalism? The question is a fundamental one, and will have to be answered consciously in the future, and it already has an important influence on the policies of socialist movements.

On the horizon we can distinguish many other questions. One of them is the problem of permanent training. The individual who is supported by the state must receive training throughout his or her life. Society must assure adequate organisation and utilisation of free time, since free time will be increasingly protracted. This is a longstanding issue, but it has a very different dimension and meaning in our day and age. The negative experiences of the building of socialism also pose the problem of the moral education of the individual in the socialist societies of the future. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century there was a debate about so-called ‘ethical socialism’, which terminated with its defeat, and the ejection of the ‘ethical’ tendency from the revolutionary branch of the workers’ movement. Some Marxist philosophers are also concerned with the problems of ethics, but that has nothing to do with the problem at hand. It is a question here of the place which the subject occupies in the practice of the socialist movement, in the inspiration of the pro-socialist position. We know how negative is the experience of the countries of ‘real socialism’, and we must therefore reconsider the problem of the creation of a new socialist individual. Finally, there is a purely political ‘unexplored area’: should the divisions of the socialist movement continue even though the motives which caused these divisions in the past no longer exist? Or should one foresee – and advance towards – a future reunification?

‘UNEXPLORED AREAS’ IN THE PRESENT SITUATION OF SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS

Of the matters referred to above, the following, in my judgement, demand a particularly rapid clarification, if we want our discussion on the socialism of the future to be useful:

- What do we mean by the term ‘socialism’ when we use it to study its future forms?
- What influence does the present industrial revolution have on the dynamics of the socialist movement around the world?
- What posture should be adopted by the socialist movement towards contemporary mass movements and, in particular, what attitude should be taken by the socialist movement towards religion, and to the movements related to religion?
The meaning of ‘socialism’

The word ‘socialism’, used as an antonym of ‘capitalism’, is so common that we use it with no hesitation and without any profound reflection on its content, yet it has multiple meanings. I shall exclude the difference I mentioned earlier between ‘socialism’ as a political movement and as a social regime, and concentrate here on that content which is related to the socio-political regime which the socialist movement would like to create, and which is put forward by the ideology of that movement. I was confronted with this problem when I had a discussion with supporters of the thesis that the countries of ‘real socialism’ were not socialist. I must point out that the discussion was carried out within a party on the left. The political right did not deny the socialist character of these countries, since from its point of view the deformations which occurred in those countries were only what could be expected from socialism. But the left felt irritated by those political deformities which contradicted the vision of an ideal socialism. Without defending their deformities, I continue to hold the position that according to a Marxist view regarding the nature of the ownership of the means of production, the basic economic form of these countries was socialist. But, at the same time, the superstructure that they built was incompatible with the generally understood ideals of a socialist society. Precisely from this contradiction emerges an important warning for the supporters of socialism: the revolution in the sphere of the ownership of the means of production and the consequent liquidation of the capitalist class which it entails, are not sufficient conditions for building a socialist society, which encompasses attributes such as freedom, equality and fraternity. Under certain circumstances there can even arise a society with a communo-fascist superstructure based on the nationalisation of the means of production.

Given the experience we have had, I consider that this warning is very important. We have to abandon the Marxist concept of classifying societies only according to the form of property ownership that exists within them. It is not enough merely to examine the base of the society; we must also examine its superstructure. But when we begin to analyse this matter, we have to recognise that there are various notions of socialism (as a system), and this explains the variety of political movements – frequently at loggerheads – which call themselves ‘socialist’. The history of the idea of socialism shows us this, as well as the present situation of the socialist movement, affected sometimes by animosities which can even be fratricidal. If the rupture between communists and socialists in the Weimar Republic had not happened, Hitler would not have come to power. General Franco would not have triumphed in the Spanish Civil War if the battles between communists, socialists, anarchists and Trotskyists had not taken place.

Among the varieties of socialism that we can distinguish are: state socialism (Marx and Engels predicted the gradual disappearance of the state under socialism as a form of exercising power, as an instrument of oppression; but also – and some people forget this – the continuation of the state as an administrator of property); socialism without a state (anarchism as conceived by Bakunin and Kropotkin and their supporters); democratic socialism (the version of present-day socialists and social democrats which can be traced back partly to Engels and his position regarding parliamentarism and its role); the socialism of the dictatorship of the proletariat (Lenin’s version, which may have referred to certain ideas of Marx, but which was interpreted by the Bolsheviks and accepted by the Comintern, and applied according to national conditions); bureaucratic socialism (as a generalisation of the experience of the countries with ‘real socialism’); the socialism of popular self-management (based mainly on the example of Yugoslavia after its break with the Cominform, but supported by many adversaries of Stalinism, headed by the Trotskyist movement of the Fourth International); socialism of the planned economy and market socialism in its different versions, including the complicated problem of the ownership of the means of production; one-party socialism and pluralist socialism (the argument between these factions is part of the argument between democratic socialism and dictatorial socialism, but it is such an important aspect, especially in the light of recent events, that it deserves separate mention).

Does this mean that we lack positive knowledge of what the idea ‘socialism’ means (except for its opposition to capitalism based on the character of the means of production)? Or what is it that enables the supporters of socialism to gather under one banner, despite the sometimes very deep differences which separate them? We can respond, on the basis of the history of the socialist movement around the world, that it is the conviction that the main goal of socialism (as a social regime) is the abolition of all kinds of human exploitation. The slogans of ‘liberty, equality and
solidarity’ are incorporated into this conviction. The rest is secondary.

The influence of the present industrial revolution

I have often written on this subject, and have even done so stubbornly. The many papers in which I have broached this subject, and especially my book What Future Awaits Us?, allow me to raise this important matter in a summary fashion. The intensity of the new industrial revolution is variable and depends on the level of development reached in any given place. One of its principal forces is the advance in electronics, which provokes in turn a great progress in automation and robotisation, both in production and in services.

In the social sphere, these processes lead to massive structural unemployment. This phenomenon is impossible to eradicate, as was already foreseen by the most distinguished economist of our century, John Maynard Keynes, in 1930. In the 1960s, those ideas were repeated indirectly by Milton Friedman and James Tobin, regarded as ‘apostles’ of the free market, who invented the term ‘income without work’ to overcome the economic consequences of this process of pauperisation. As work disappears in its traditional sense, so wage labour is also reduced. This means a contraction of the working class, and also new problems related to the need to guarantee people a certain level of income which is not linked to a traditional job. It would entail – and this would be a wide concept – all sorts of useful occupations from a social point of view. In such a situation, there are no valid excuses: no matter how often one adds the adjective ‘democratic’ or ‘reformist’ to the word ‘socialism’ they do not of themselves guarantee that anything effective will be done to solve the unemployment problem.

The only real solution will be a new distribution of the social product, because without such a move it will be impossible to finance a scheme based on ‘income without labour’. I must say that we shall witness the vengeance of Marx from his grave if the formulas ‘democratic’ and ‘reformist’ disregard the social consequences of economic change. The authentic revolution – carried out with more democratic and reformist means – is demonstrating the accuracy of the basic thesis of historical materialism about inevitable change in the superstructure when the base of society undergoes a radical change. Let us permit the modern followers of the famous Monsieur Jourdain of Molière pleasure in the discovery about which they have always spoken – even though they will deny it most vehemently: what is taking shape on the horizon is the most authentic revolution. There is no doubt about this, at least so far as the economic system is concerned. But it is evident that other aspects of the social formation will also change: the relations between classes, the political system, the dominant culture. The same can be said about the perspectives for a new socialism. If we are not suffering from a ‘closed mind’, it will be obvious that it is a new vision of socialism.

In sum, the question is as follows: if the revolution in the sphere of technology, which is the basis for production and for services, makes direct labour unnecessary, such work will gradually disappear, and there will be an increase in structural unemployment. This is not a Marxist thesis, as some critics insist in order to diminish its credibility, but one derived from common sense and based not on quotations, but on facts and logical reasoning. Marx and the later neo-classical economists had nothing to say on this subject (except for his own prophetic passage in the Grundrisse, and the work of Keynes in the 1930s). The thesis cannot be extracted from Marxism, although what is Marxist is the thesis that if such a situation does occur, then the changes in the infrastructure of society will also affect the superstructure. This leads us to foresee a revolution in the whole of modern civilisation. The arguments that can be given to support this thesis are simple and are based on common sense (being a Marxist is neither an obstacle nor a conditio sine qua non for reaching the same conclusions). If structural unemployment is an inexorable phenomenon of the present industrial revolution and continues to increase, society will be obliged to take practical measures in at least two senses: (1) to ensure that those people not working for a wage (which is not the same as being unemployed) receive means of subsistence; and (2) to ensure that they receive socially useful jobs which can compensate for paid labour. Redistribution of the social product is needed both to generate the resources for economic and social reform, and then to deal with the problem of the relations between politics and society. It can be said with absolute certainty that the new society will not be similar to the society of ‘real socialism’, because the deficiencies of the countries recently living under ‘real socialism’ are well known. But neither will it be a capitalist society of the traditional type. What kind of society will it be? This is the key question for social, political and, above all, socialist movements.
The role of socialist movements

From the point of view of common sense then it is not necessary to be a Marxist to think that the technological revolution in the sphere of production and services must lead to changes in other spheres of social life. It is also true that these changes will affect mass movements. Such new social movements clearly pose a challenge to traditional socialist thinking. The key issue in this context is the extent to which the traditional movements can respond to the challenge.

The case of the challenge to traditional socialist values from religious movements is different. On the one hand there is liberation theology, represented by some Catholics, which undoubtedly is the most powerful and effective revolutionary force in Latin America. There is Islamic fundamentalism as represented by the pro-Iranian Shiite movement; there also are pro-'socialist' movements such as those represented by the Libyan leader Gadafy. The diversity is related to the diversity of the religious base which serves as the source of inspiration. However, apart from appearances and phraseology, the movements do have a real basis in today's social problems, in problems which are raised in different ways by different media, and in different parts of the world. These problems are usually disguised by different religious rhetorics which are conditioned by local history and culture but the claims of these movements are fairly similar. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, all speak of the need for a new society. As a result, these movements acquire an anti-capitalist revolutionary character. This may well be distinct from socialism, and above all from the version of socialism practised by the countries of 'real socialism', with which they were familiar as a practical example. This complicates the situation. We need to reflect on the consequences of this for the strategy and tactics of the traditional socialist movement.

This gives a current dimension to a problem which must be studied as a subject for the future. Specific problems relating to mass movements cannot be treated in an identical manner, because these movements are very different in their origins, their inspiration, and their form. Nevertheless, certain considerations of a general and theoretical character are possible and timely, since they can help order the phenomena which we are examining. I shall limit myself here to those considerations. Above all it is a question of the attitude of the traditional socialist movements vis-a-vis religion which, after a fashion, is still linked to Marxism as an ideology, or still cultivates anti-clerical traditions dating from the Enlightenment (a phenomenon quite prevalent in socialist parties). As is well known, Marxism declared religion the opium of the masses, and combatted its influence on society from the basis of materialist atheism. I shall leave aside the philosophical-metaphysical aspects of the problem and concentrate on its historical sources. In Marx's day the churches often played a reactionary and counter-revolutionary role in the fight against feudalism and against capitalism, and the opposition of the nascent workers' movement was due precisely to this fact.

But history also teaches us that the activities carried out by many social movements which had a religious nature were sometimes revolutionary. For this reason, when traditional socialist movements examine social movements such as liberation theology, they should not worry whether the religious tenets accepted by the members of that movement may or may not be acceptable to non-believers, or whether they are compatible or not with Marxism (something which for social democracy is unimportant because they long ago rejected Marxism as a theoretical and ideological basis). They must find out about the social objectives of those movements, which are sometimes openly revolutionary vis-a-vis capitalism. Marx did not condemn all social religious movements, as can be noted in his opinion of the Peasant War in Germany, which contained religious overtones. Today we are dealing with movements which are sometimes revolutionary, allied to the traditional pro-socialist and proletarian movements. We therefore need to judge each case on its merits, and in effect there is no reason to oppose collaboration between the traditional workers' movement in its different versions and the popular movements which are linked to religion. On the contrary, it is something that is necessary, since in the future the role of the moral factor will be increasingly important in society.

THE 'UNEXPLORED AREA' IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM

When we start talking about future social phenomena, the question of 'unexplored areas' becomes complicated in as much as the future itself is in its entirety an 'unexplored area'. Nevertheless, there is a whole series of future matters – especially those that involve the near future – which are susceptible to relatively precise fore-
casts if one starts with a knowledge of the facts and the laws which govern their dynamics. There are some matters of enormous social importance which can be shaped by conscious action. This is where the feedback from the 'unexplored areas' of the future and the present merge. To shape the society of the future according to our plans and desires – and we have such a possibility – we must consider those problems, find alternative solutions for them, and act, in most cases as from now, in order to reach the desired goals.

This is a particularly important question because the conclusions reached ought to influence our present activity. It is a difficult task; it requires freedom of thought, the rejection of all dogmatism and taboos. It is unacceptable that people who participate in that difficult and responsible task be subject to a 'loyalty test' by institutions and structures which allegedly know better than anyone what is allowed and what is forbidden. At the present time only candidates for suicide can oppose the demand for liberty of thought and expression. We have to oppose all attempts to limit that freedom – attempts which doubtless will happen. The most efficient way to do so would be the institutionalisation of that right to liberty of thought. Here, all I want to do is to point out the problems which, in my judgement, constitute the principal 'unexplored areas' which we can distinguish on the horizon. The following list is incomplete, and the selection is conditioned by the point of view of the author.

First the economic structure:

- The social ownership of the means of production versus private property;
- A planned economy versus a market economy;
- Centralism versus decentralisation.

Secondly, the social structure (especially the class structure) of socialism in the future:

- What social classes will exist in such a situation?
- Is socialism possible without the working class?

Thirdly, the political structure of the society, which involves the following specific aspects:

- State and democracy (the gradual disappearance of the dictatorship of the proletariat together with the disappearance of the working class);
- Political pluralism versus the single party system.

Fourthly, the creation of the 'new individual' of socialism, and the role of 'ethical socialism'.

And, fifthly, the role of Marxism in the socialism of the future.

First, to begin with the economic structure of the socialism of the future we must ask the basic question: what do we mean in this context by 'socialism'?

Social and private ownership

Above all, we are faced with the problem of the ownership of the means of production under socialism. The matter is singularly important because it is a decisive element in the place and role of Marxism (as a theory and as an ideology) in the socialism of the future.

Until now, the most specific and definite feature of socialism versus capitalism has been the social character of the ownership of the means of production. In capitalism such ownership is private. For Marx, that was an axiom on which he based the entire structure of thought presented in Capital (surplus value, exploitation of the proletariat) and his conception of the successive economic structures of society (in the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy). Marx differentiated economic structures, indicating the specific characteristics of the property rights in each of them. Socialism is at the apex of the development of society, because it implies the disappearance of private property and of the class structures which are conditioned by that property. The characteristics which distinguish socialism as a fundamentally social regime are – according to that theory – the social character of the ownership of the means of production. The only point of discussion is the relationship between socialisation and nationalisation, as opposed to the private character of the relations which exist under capitalism. To this is added the conviction (shared by different schools of socialist thought) that socialism – with socialised property – liquidates the class-based capitalist regime, the exploitation of the proletarian class, and the anarchy of the economy caused by market mechanisms which hinder the economic development of society. For Marx the form that the new distribution of goods should take under socialism (in the first stage, according to the work done by the individual, and in later stages, according to individual needs, that is, communism) is a function of that basic and revolutionary transformation in the sphere of the ownership of the means of production. Marx conceived society as a whole as consisting of a base and a superstructure, or
more precisely, a system of superstructures, which were dependent on that base. But, except for some passing comments, he did not pronounce on the superstructure of socialism. He did not do so, as a scientist, in order to avoid the accusation of being a prophet. From this point of view, despite all their defects of superstructure, the countries of 'real socialism' were a version of socialism, so far as their national infrastructure of the means of production was concerned.

For various reasons which are already apparent, and which place the theory and practice of socialism in deep crisis, it would be very difficult to suppose that the socialism of the future (in the sense of a socialist society) could maintain the conventional view. Marxists will be faced with a very difficult situation. But when asking what socialism will be like in the future we are not only thinking of the supporters of Marxism. The majority of the socialist and social-democratic parties have rejected Marxism as an ideology. They have a more comfortable situation than the Marxists because, on the road to new points of view and new solutions, they are not faced with the same obstacles. Nonetheless, the non-Marxist socialist parties will also face difficulties, because they will also have to answer new questions, and re-stock an ideological arsenal which has been depleted by the rejection of Marxism. That arsenal cannot remain empty. The old trick of reformists which states that the objective is the least of the problems, because what matters is the road one follows, will not be very useful in an era of revolutionary change; that is, in an era in which people will be asking where does the road eventually lead. This question must be answered, because the new social movements, and among them, the ecologists, are already giving their own answers. The party which is unable to give satisfactory answers to its members – and especially to its younger ones – will be defeated. Today, ideology is necessary to indicate the objective which is being pursued, and not only the road which leads to it. Right-wing parties also understand this. What I mean to say is that in certain cases, the same problems are faced by everyone, even by those who are not tainted by the heritage of Marxism. If this is so, let us try to analyse them.

So what can safely be said about that not-so-distant future? First of all it will give us a society which, in a certain sense, is collective, and in that sense socialist. This is indicated by the results of the current industrial revolution, whose rhythm is accelerating. Those results lead inevitably to the disappearance of labour in the traditional sense, and the need to install a new system for the distribution of the social product in order to ensure that there are sufficient resources to maintain an entire army of people who are removed from traditional jobs (automation and robotisation). Those people will have to dedicate themselves to socially useful jobs – that is – jobs of a new kind, financed in a new way by society. We have to add to this the problem of structural unemployment in the Third World, which in the year 2000 will contain 85 per cent of the world population. Its problems will not be solved without a new distribution of the global wealth of the world, except at the risk of an equally global catastrophe. The first thesis which I posit then is that we can speak, in economic terms, of a socialism of the future, and not only of the future of socialism.

Secondly, if we take into consideration the superstructure of society – and especially politics – we can see a clear alternative. On the one hand there is the democratic version in a form so far unknown in history, made possible by immense increases in social wealth and embodying the vision of socialism as an idea of universal welfare, of liberty and of democracy. On the other hand is the totalitarian-repressive version which makes real the possibility of a communo-fascist regime, given the present interplay of international political forces generated by the collaboration of the old dominant classes with a new class arising from the monopolisation of information as a new means of production, and supported by regressive ideologies, including nationalism.

The understanding and assimilation of these two premises by the socialist movement is extremely important for their struggle, as well as for the elimination of the danger which it represents for them in the future. I think that such a basis, such a starting point, is indispensable in order to return to the main problem of our reflections: the role of socialised property (versus private property) in the creation of the socialism of the future. I must begin by admitting that I do not have a decisive answer to this question. On the one hand it is a question of a basic element of the concept of socialism (accepted throughout its history): private property is – according to some – the basis of the capitalist exploitation of the working class, and the basis for the market economy which hinders the development of the means of production; whereas the social ownership of the means of production eliminates – the same people say – both of these negative phenomena and is, therefore, an indispensable condition for
building a socialist regime. On the other hand, after 70 years’ experience of ‘real socialism’, and whatever may happen in the future, we are obliged to make several observations.

First, the revolutionary elimination of private ownership of the means of production, although an indispensable condition for the socialist revolution, is not a sufficient condition. This is a statement which will feel like a cold shower even to the most enthusiastic supporters of the ‘revolution against Marx’s Capital’. Gramsci, when he wrote in 1918 about the October Revolution in Russia did not share the negative view, in that sense, of Kautsky or Plekhanov, but several years later, in his Prison Notebooks, he was ‘converted’ to the idea of social consensus as an indispensable prior condition for the socialist revolution. If Marx’s warnings had been listened to in time (German Ideology, 1845–6), as well as Gramsci’s Notebooks, the socialist movement (and above all its communist branch) would have avoided that blemish which so tainted its prestige and would have avoided many torments and humiliations for the ‘redeemed’ populations. There were also fatal consequences in the transformation into socialist countries, after the Second World War, of the countries with popular democracies (strictly as a result of the strategic interests of the Soviet Union in 1948). This cost the socialist world dearly. Lastly, we must point out the enormous errors committed in the development of the largest countries of ‘real socialism’, the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, both of which face very serious political and economic difficulties.

Secondly, there has been no practical confirmation of the statement that private ownership hinders the development of the means of production, while socialised ownership accelerates it: the results arising from the rivalry of the two systems of ownership in the sphere of technological innovation, of productivity and of the development of the means of production, are shameful.

Thirdly, the thesis regarding the anarchy of the market economy, and its negative effects on social life, as a consequence of a crisis of overproduction inevitable in the capitalist system, has not been proved. Economic crisis affected all the countries of ‘real socialism’ to a much larger degree than it affects the capitalist countries. There is, by the way, a letter of Marx which usually goes unquoted, in which the creator of scientific socialism wrote that if capitalism knew how to overcome the cyclical crises that affect it (Marx considered that impossible) there would be no need to overthrow it. What Marx was unable to conceive – because it could not occur to his creative mind, even as a possibility – was that socialist countries would need to find a way out of the economic stagnation in which they were immersed, by means of a market economy, and concessions in favour of private property.

Fourthly, it turned out that economic anarchy was originated not by the market economy, but by an excess of centralism, by the lack of theoretical ideas, and by deficiencies of the technical basis for the efficient planning of the economy. Fortunately for the former socialist countries there exist ultra-capitalist multinationals, from which one can learn how to plan the economy efficiently. But at the same time, it turned out that in the West, the nationalised economy (in some of those countries it reached considerable dimensions and quite modern forms) functioned quite badly, and was forcibly liquidated (re-privatised), even in areas which seemed unable to survive without financial help from the state and which were still necessary in society – steel manufacture, coal mining, etc.

Planning and the Market

More dramatic still is the problem of the planned economy versus the free market. In this case, reality played a new and terrible joke on the theorists of socialism, which in some cases led even to an almost hysterical fascination with the market economy. This situation is yet another confirmation of how insufficient are the analyses carried out in this sphere. What can be said about this?

First, there is no doubt that the concept (and practice) of the planned economy in its traditional communist version was simply a failure. This reality has led, and still leads, to real horror amongst the theorists of yesteryear, and the politicians who imposed their solutions by force. The consequences of the domination of that concept are catastrophic and I do not think that the political forces which criticise the system either in the East or in the West fully realise them, although the causes of that incomprehension (undervalueation) are different in the two cases.

Secondly, the effects of the crisis have caused great international confusion among Marxist theorists and practitioners. In some extreme cases this confusion has led to a view of the market economy as the panacea, as the best method of resolving the economic problems of socialism. In my view, the current favouring of the free market
is becoming hysterical because of frustration, and is therefore more dangerous, inasmuch as the premises on which this ‘new wave’ is based have no rational basis.

Thirdly, the euphoria regarding the market economy in the former countries of ‘real socialism’ originates in the disappointments resulting from the methods used so far in the planning of the economy, and because of the judgement that the economic success of the West was due to the free market. But the funny thing is that this free market – which many supporters of anti-communism have invented – does not exist anywhere in the world. I do not know what plays a bigger role in the camouflage of the economic dictatorship in world markets – the multinationals and the financial capital which backs them or the terrifying intellectual inability of economists who claim to be on the Marxist side.

In the fourth place, economic planning, and not the free market, is becoming more important in a world of global economy which is developing in front of our very eyes. It is obvious that it is not a question here of a falsely conceived plan; it is not a question of a monopolistic force pushing the economy of the country in question, attempting to regulate in detail all aspects of economic life (there are areas such as the productivity of labour which must be the product of competition, and therefore, the result of the operation of the market). It is a question of planning based on knowledge, on familiarity with the real needs of society and – looking at the subject from a wider perspective – the needs on an international level. It is a question of needs which exist at a given moment, and are even intentionally generated. Such planning is based on knowledge and on creative imagination. A good example is the work carried out by the government of Japan in the development of microelectronics in the past 20 years. It foresaw the negative and costly social consequences caused by the anarchy of the market, and eliminates them, but without liquidating the forces that are at play in the market. At first glance, it may appear that we are formulating contradictory opinions. This could be the case if one understands by ‘planning of the economy’ a mechanism which tries to bring all economic life under its control and to become a single force which prevents the participation of other forces which organise social life in an easier and more effective way. The contradiction is generated, in the first place, by those who have an erroneous concept of economic planning (which was traditional in the countries of ‘real socialism’), without taking into account a fact which is of little importance when taken by itself: the normal development of the economy needs the cooperation of two forces: planning and the market.

Planning should be based on knowledge of real social needs, both national and international. It should reflect a scientific knowledge of production technology and creative imagination. It should also be able to anticipate new social needs of a kind which the market alone cannot anticipate in the service of consumer needs. If the domain of both social and private or personal needs is recognised in this sense, then the main contradiction assumed between planning and the market will itself be abolished. One example is the social costs of private enterprise failure. By market criteria such companies should go to the wall. But in many cases, if they do so, enormous investment in human and physical resources may be wasted. The Japanese have not been slow to learn this lesson in the case of fifth generation computers. The real problem is the ambition to eliminate one option and go either just for planning or just for the market. It was precisely this attitude which ruined the so-called socialist economies which opted for planning versus the market. On the other hand, those economies which opt for the market without any kind of planning also risk enormous social and economic costs, not least in the mismanagement or non-management of the international economy. There is therefore a key balance between planning and markets which needs to be asserted and defended. Such a point may seem bizarre to some, or banal to others. But, in both theory and fact, it is a matter of great importance.

Fifthly, there is the extent to which the critics of planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe have not realised how much their own disenchantment with planning is a consequence of their opting for planning versus the market, rather than a combination of planning with the market. The consequence is an unreal euphoria for market forces, generated from a frustration arising from a totally planned economy. From the technical point of view, planning as practised in the countries of Central Eastern Europe was ‘a crime carried out with contemptible means’. First came the absence of computers, because they had not yet been invented, and then there were few of them, of insufficient capacity and ineptly used. In the light of modern computer technology, the planning carried out in the ‘real socialist’ countries was a costly and useless exercise. Such planning
could not be effective even if the econometric base were appropriate.

What can be learned from these negative results? Evidently we cannot say that economic planning is useless. What does not work is bad economic planning. I heard lately in Poland that the computer could never simulate the ‘vibes’ of the market. I wish to say that such a statement is a fairytale, and can be uttered only by people who have not the slightest idea what can be simulated nowadays on a computer of the third or fourth generation, let alone the ones which will be arriving during the next decade. In this sense we can confirm that, from a technical point of view, economic planning is possible, even on a global scale. We can also be sure that a planned economy is, and will be, easier and more perfect as we advance into the future. This is a valuable indicator for the socialist society of the future.

Centralism versus decentralisation

There is the further issue of the problem of ‘centralism versus decentralisation’ in the economic structure of the socialism of the future. As things look now, the development of technology based on microelectronics leads us to think that decentralisation in production and services has a future. One can expect that the development of technology (above all in computers with artificial intelligence) will continue to impel the growth of small companies, especially in the area of services. But at the same time, experience shows that microelectronics requires increasingly large investments, and production infrastructures which are ever more complex. This leads us to the opposite goal of centralisation, not only of capital for investment, but also of production processes. It is possible that both these tendencies are really needed, and in that case there would be no contradiction, but simply a two-sided coin, or two simultaneous effects of the same process. I cannot answer this question. But we know that the question is important, and in due course will need to be answered.

Secondly, I shall now look at the problems of the social form and class structure of the socialism of the future.

SOCIAL CLASSES

Our thoughts about the economic forms of the social class structure of the socialism of the future – as with the social structure of capitalism – must change over time. I base my thoughts on the thesis to which I referred earlier which says: a logical consequence of the process of automation and robotisation of production and services is the disappearance of labour in its traditional sense, which leads in turn to the conclusion that the traditional proletariat will also disappear. This would involve the question of whether it is possible to have socialism without the working class – even though its historical genesis is related precisely to the appearance of the proletariat and to its exploitation by capital? It is a question of fundamental importance. Some very respected and concerned Marxists hold to the view that the present working class – especially those parts of it involved in manual labour – will disappear, but its place will be taken by the scientists, engineers, technicians, executives and other ‘leaders’ of the automated production process. But this is a mistake. It is obvious that someone – a human being – will have to direct the process of production. Marx wrote in his Grundrisse (1857–8) about the role of scientists and engineers of his day, promoting science to the role of a new means of production. But that does not mean that the class involved up of those people will be a substitute for the proletariat exploited by capital. On the contrary, this new class of people will become a new owning class (it will be able to monopolise the new means of production which is information) and, under certain conditions, a new dominant class. In no case will it be a new ‘erzatz’ proletariat, and the relationships of exploitation of human labour will not enter into it: other forms of exploitation may arise, but the exploitation of human labour will disappear, because the jobs themselves will disappear. Robots can be used in the production process, but they cannot be exploited in the sense that working people can be exploited, by being stripped of the capital gains that they generate. The rules which served as the basis for socialism have changed. Therefore the correct question is this: if there is a future in which these new rules will be valid, will there be a socialism? What will that word mean? And what kind of socialism will it be?

This question, nonetheless, is only part of the problem we face. In its entirety it involves the class structure and the social form of the socialism of the future. The roots of the problem can be found in present realities, yet they contradict one of Marx’s fundamental theories. He foresaw an increasing polarisation of classes which would lead to the disappearance of the middle class, which would be mainly absorbed by the prolet-
Unexplored areas of present-day socialism

ariat. The state of affairs which we can observe nearly 150 years later is diametrically opposite. The working class is constantly diminishing, as is the social area of the capitalist class, while the possessions of the middle class increase. There is already a vast literature on this subject, notably the inaugural lecture delivered in 1988 by Professor Salustiano of the Complutense University of Madrid entitled ‘The Society of the Middle Classes’. We are already living in a society in which – as opposed to that which Marx predicted – the role of the middle classes is growing. And in the future? The dynamism which today’s society shows leads one to believe that the process will accelerate. This would mean that the socialism of the future would be a society of the middle classes. Our ‘unexplored area’ in this case acquires a dangerous dimension. On the one hand, the situation which we have described gives us the answer to that logical question of who will be dominated by the new owning class if, under certain favourable circumstances, it should be transformed into the dominant class? Society will be dominated by the new middle classes which have appeared. But a parallel question arises as to whether these middle classes will not generate capitalism, as Marxist theory foresees. It would become a very complex problem, because then socialism would generate capitalism. This is a puzzle, and a problem which requires an answer if sense is to be made of anything that is said about socialism in the future. At the very least one should be conscious of the fact that this idea creates a new problem.

I think that the problem of socialism is not limited exclusively to economic exploitation. It covers all aspects of society. This means that socialism has also to take into account other forms of oppression and exploitation (for example, the problem of nationalities, women, etc.). It must also take into account cultural problems which are based on changing systems of values. But traditionally economic exploitation was always the most important. Precisely because of this, other problems were considered secondary. Socialism – as a social ideal and seen in a wide perspective – is the struggle against all manifestations of evils in social life. As a form of organisation of that life, it tries to eliminate those evils in an institutionalised manner. This means that the problem of socialism is very wide. It covers the totality of social life. If we understand this, it is clear that change in part of the programme does not invalidate the whole idea, but rather motivates a restructuring. The problem lies more in the psychological barriers faced by people who were accustomed to examine a problem in a certain way, rather than in the problem itself.

The socialism of the future will have its work cut out for it. To put it plainly, socialism will concentrate – more than in the past – on the central problems of life, on building a better system of values, and on creating a new and universal humanism. It will be something new in the history of socialism because it will not lose sight of the organisational and social problems which are the basis of daily life. Is this possible or is it simply utopian? It is possible, and it is not utopian, thanks to the new economic base, unknown until now in the history of society. I am irritated most by those ‘realists’ of various kinds who from time to time raise their voices in various socialist movements of our day, yet, basing themselves on the misery of ‘real socialism’, have always been those who mocked the ideals of socialism. Let us hope that the future development of the movement will enable us to be rid of such pessimism.

Thirdly, we are faced with the issue of the political form of the socialist society of the future. In this context I shall concentrate on the problem of socialist democracy (democracy versus dictatorship).

DEMOCRACY AND THE STATE

Let me first clarify a well-known issue. For instance, there is the principle of the distribution of goods in two phases of the development of socialism, which Marx referred to in the Critique of the Gotha Programme. However, some people hold that this is already a thoroughly explored area, where the answers are known. They are wrong, in fact, and their erroneous views were in large part responsible for the failures in the building of socialism over the last 70 years. The time has come to speak of these things openly in the international socialist movement. The central question is democracy. In its abstract sense it is a simple and understandable notion. It is the contradiction of dictatorship, of any dictatorship. Nevertheless, the deformation that it suffered in the countries of ‘real socialism’ converted it into a notion of intrinsic contradictions, which led to the identification as democratic of the dictatorship which abolished democracy. The phenomenon can be found in one form or another in societies with class regimes but became most
acute in the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat which was identified with 'our' democracy, and, worse yet, with a 'superior' quality of democracy. In this sense, the bourgeois dictatorships, and especially the fascist ones, were more honest: they proclaimed openly the abolition of democracy, and their hostility towards it. What happened within the Marxist-Leninist context of the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat was hypocrisy versus democracy. The countries of 'real socialism', and what remains of the communist movement, are currently paying a very high price for this state of affairs.

I have not the slightest doubt that the future of socialism in the highly developed countries will in all probability acquire the form of a democratic state. This could also come about as a product of the historical lesson which the countries of 'real socialism' provide, and of the price which their societies have paid, and will pay for a long time to come, for neglecting democracy and accepting the Leninist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is also true that in the specific situation under which socialism was introduced — in violation of specific prohibitions on the subject by Marx — in countries which were still not mature enough for the new regime, it would have been impossible to stay in power without using dictatorial methods and violence. However, we cannot exclude the possibility of the appearance of new socialist countries honoris causa (especially in Latin America), where the known elements and consequences of the dictatorship of the proletariat would be felt. In highly developed countries this will certainly not happen. This means that for us, since we are mainly interested in the most developed countries, the issue is not a priority.

I also exclude from consideration here the problem of the state in the socialism of the future. It is true that the anarchists still favour a society of self-management without a state, but I am profoundly convinced that this is an antiquated utopia. And the same can be said for the more moderate Marxists who held that the state would vanish as an organ of repression, and would subsist as an organ for the administration of things. Lenin defended this idea in his book, *State and Revolution*. Experience has shown us that the state is such a valuable instrument, that only dreamers can imagine a situation in which we could do without it. The problem of the state and democracy will continue to be present in the socialism of the future. It is not a question of how that democracy will be, but whether there will be one or not. So we have a new problem. Can there be at the same time a socialist infrastructure and a dictatorial and totalitarian superstructure, or, putting it more simply, a communo-fascist superstructure? Yes, there can, and past experience proves it. Rational forecasts of the future also speak of such a possibility.

As far as the past is concerned, the history of all the countries of 'real socialism' shows that the result of a socialist revolution in a situation in which the necessary objective and subjective conditions had not been met, was the need for dictatorial measures in order to maintain the power that it already had. That is how that strange hybrid called communo-fascism developed. This matter, disturbing when one is not prepared to assimilate it, requires an extended and detailed analysis which I cannot go into here, both for lack of space and because it is really a different subject. Meanwhile, I will point out that while that analysis is not completed, the discussion about Stalinism — of *Stalinism* as a political system — cannot be considered closed. As far as the future is concerned, we must take into account the fact that traditional social classes will gradually disappear (especially the working class). At the same time, there will probably arise a new owning class (owning the new means of production, i.e. information), made up of scientists, engineers, technicians, executives, etc. Based partly on bureaucracy and on the remains of the old owning classes, it will tend to transform itself into a dominant class. There would then be social struggles and a tendency to totalitarian power. In this manner, taking into account the collectivist infrastructure of society, there would be a danger of a communo-fascist regime of a new kind. All this is an 'unexplored area', and what comes out of it will depend on how people behave, starting with the preventive action that must be carried out as of now. This is precisely why I write these words: to awaken consciousness, discussion and action.

This discussion creates an adequate framework and appropriate basis to analyse the problem of political pluralism. The matter might seem obvious, although (or precisely because) the experience of the countries of 'real socialism' proves the opposite: democracy without pluralism and without freedom of expression is a notion which is intrinsically contradictory, or, speaking plainly, a lie invented to fool the gullible. After 70 years of experience with the dictatorship of the proletariat in its Leninist-Stalinist version and its catastrophic consequences, it is obvious that socialist democracy must be pluralist (multi-
party). And that is how the democracy of the socialism of the future will be. The operation of a multi-party system will depend on the specific conditions which exist, and on how people behave. The precise answer to that question will be obtained when that socialist society of the future happens, but we ought to start to think about it now.

Fourthly, it is evident that everything I have mentioned above depends, to a large extent, on a subjective factor, which is how people will be affected by the conditions and social education of the socialism of the future. One has heard talk of the 'new individual of socialism' ever since the socialist experiment began. Unfortunately, the results so far have been dreadful, and perhaps it is here that the experiment has suffered its greatest setback. Not only was the creation of the 'new individual' impossible: the old one had had its back, its moral spinal column, broken. I recommend that one follow what the Soviet press reports on the subject of corruption (endemic at the highest levels). There were mafias like those of Chicago in the 1930s; alcohol, drugs and prostitution are a fact; theft is such a generalised plague that even aid given to the victims of the Armenian earthquake 'disappeared' . . . In the uncovering of these calamities glasnost really worked. As far as other countries of 'real socialism' are concerned, I can say, modestly, about Poland: *de te fabula narratur*. One can state with absolute certainty that if the socialism of the future does not tackle the problem with energy and decisiveness, it will fail.

What is to be done in this regard? It would be absurd to give advice without knowing the specific circumstances of the future. Nevertheless, there is something which can be pointed out in order to create the appropriate conditions for serious discussion of this subject. At the turn of the century there was an implacable battle in the ranks of the workers' movement (especially in Germany), against 'ethical socialism' which originated mainly from the neo-Kantian philosophical school and tended to replace the economic and scientific sociology of Marx by ethics. The formula which the neo-Kantians proposed was an attempt to return the ideology of the workers' movement to its previous utopian positions. The attack launched by the 'orthodox' Marxists against the theories of ethical socialism was, as I see it, understandable and correct. Nonetheless, in these ideological struggles an extremely valuable element for the motivation of the supporters of socialism disappeared: ethical values.

There is no doubt that these values are part of the positions of the supporters of all factions of socialism. It would be impossible otherwise to struggle – sometimes with great sacrifice – for the achievement of values such as liberty, equality, the elimination of exploitation, internationalism, etc. However, in the context of Marxism – for obvious historical reasons – economic determinism largely pushed aside other elements of ideology. It was especially opposed to a tendency which attempted to eliminate the economic and sociological factor, and the class struggle, by appealing to universal human values. I have no intention of rehabilitating 'ethical socialism', and even less, of criticising the scientific basis of the present-day socialist movement. What I want to achieve in the context of our discussion is to underline the need to restore ethical values. It is a question of understanding the influence which a system of values has on the individual, and the need to remake that system of values so that it helps in building socialism.

IDEAS AND IDEOLOGIES

Finally, I wish to discuss the issue of the role and position of Marxism, which is also, although experience might seem to show otherwise, an 'unexplored area' of the map of the socialism of the future. Socialism is a scientific theory because, on the basis of facts which can be communicated, and with a specific method and ordering of those facts, one can achieve a systematic description of social reality, and of the laws which govern it. Also, on this basis, one can predict social development. The scientific character, in this sense, of Marxist theory, does not guarantee *a priori* the truth of the theses, which may be confirmed or refuted by praxis. Without calling into question the scientific character of a theory, one can criticise its various claims, and since Marxist theory is, in essence, an empirical theory it is understandable that a change in the facts should lead to a change or elimination of the antiquated elements of the theory.

Marxism is at the same time an ideology, and in the specialised literature, there is a *great variety* of definitions of the ideology which are frequently contradictory. I understand by 'ideology' a system of beliefs and attitudes, which, on the basis of a system of social values, determines the aims and social aspirations of individuals. Without such an ideology there can be no political movement, no political party; and only in that sense can an
ideology be defined as progressive or reactionary, proletarian or bourgeois, lay or religious, etc. Any attempt to oppose science and ideology in the multiple theories about the ‘end of ideologies’ (at a time when ideology acquires a singular importance in public life) is proof of semantic incomprehension, or of scientific fraud. The phrase I have quoted is identified with the end of Marxism, as if this were the only ideology in existence, at a time when ideologies are multiplying in diverse forms. This attempt, therefore, has a clearly defined (reactionary) political purpose. Given the stated character of Marxist ideology and of the Marxist theory linked to it, it is obvious that the theses of that ideology are subject to modifications which may at times be radical. Marx used the term to mean a ‘false consciousness’, or, as he himself said, a camera obscura, which represents reality in a deformed fashion, placing things upside down. But he only gave that meaning to bourgeois ideologies. Marxism, by definition, was not an ideology. History has shown that he was wrong. Marx let himself be carried away, when he made the above statement, by the conviction that his point of view was absolutely correct.

As I have already said, political parties cannot work without ideologies. One cannot attract the masses (and that is the point of all political parties, regardless of their political colour), if one does not know, or cannot explain, where one is heading, and with which social objective. If this truth applies to all political parties, it applies particularly to workers’ parties which have written on their banners the ideals of socialism. Today, virtually all supporters of socialism in highly developed industrialised countries, even the communists, are ‘reformists’. In this sense it tends to be claimed that ‘the objective is not important, it is the road which is the essence.’ Nevertheless, at the present time, all movements – even the conservative ones – plan their own objectives, their own goals. Things are changing so rapidly at present, with so many new problems on a global and local level, that the ‘ideology’ which tries to deny ideology is only an ideology of defeat. This defeat threatens movements, as well as the leaders who have to transform those movements. Traditionally, the ideology of the working class was Marxism. During its historical development two mistakes were committed: one was the dogmatic petrifcation of that ideology by the communist movement (in its specific version of Marxism-Leninism) which ignored any change of circumstance, time or place. The second mistake (committed by the socialist and social-democratic movements) was that after the Second World War they threw Marxism overboard. The socialists and social democrats rid themselves in this fashion of dogmas, but were left without an ideology, which at a time of social transformation was bound to lead to defeat.

New problems appear spontaneously which require revolutionary solutions (not in the traditional sense of a violent revolution – since we are speaking of highly developed countries – but revolutionary in their social contents). Both wings of the workers’ movement lack a modern ideology, an ideology in tune with the times. This ideology must be created. Naturally one can choose to start from scratch, rejecting what has already existed, what is traditional. This option would be a waste of time: the past cannot be wiped out. Furthermore, many workers’ parties – those linked to the communist movement, the Trotskyist movement, and to liberation theology – have not the slightest intention of renouncing Marxism as a theory or an ideology. Thus, those movements which are linked to Marxism will also be a part of the socialism of the future. As far as the socialist and social democratic parties are concerned, I am of the opinion that through pressures from changing realities, and the consequent need to have an effective ideology, they will remember how imprudently they threw out their ideological inheritance, and will renew their interest in Marxism. But even if this does not happen, it is still important to examine the future role and place of Marxism.

Here and there one hears voices speaking of the crisis of Marxism. The claim is that Marxism is to blame for the crisis of the communist movement because it served as the official basis for the practice of that movement. Hence, if communism is in crisis, so also Marxism, its theoretical underpinning, must be. But this is a typical error of non sequitur. First, one would have to demonstrate that communism really applied Marxism in practice, whereas the reality was totally different. From the beginning – and all through its development – ‘real socialism’ was a chain of acts which violated the guiding principles of Marxism. Therefore, its crisis is a crisis of Marxists, and not of Marxism. But in part the statement that classical Marxism is in crisis is correct, and there are indications that this crisis will intensify with the advance of the industrial revolution that we are witnessing. I said earlier that Marxism as a theory and an ideology is an open system, that is, a
system which changes together with reality, and with the advances of scientific knowledge. Precisely in that sense there is a whole range of Marxist theses which must be modified. Here are some examples:

Marxism emerged as a manifestation of the social and political situation of the first industrial revolution. But we are now witnessing the second (or third) industrial revolution, which modifies the objective situation and eliminates or marginalises a whole series of premises which are of fundamental importance to Marxism. The entire logical structure of Capital is based on the concept of the exploitation of the working class by the capitalists, who appropriate surplus value, but today this framework is in question. What will happen if the process of automation and robotisation of production leads to the disappearance of labour in the traditional sense of the word, and together with this, the disappearance of the working class? Everything seems to indicate that this process will take place over the coming 30-50 years in the highly developed countries. I do not propose to go into details here, but I do want to state clearly that both Capital and the whole of classical Marxist theory about the economic exploitation of the working class will end up, without a doubt, on the back shelves of the libraries, together with the volumes about the history of science that is to say, with concerns which have no current value.

Another subject is whether socialism is possible without the working class. If it is – and I think it is – we need to know in what sense and in what shape. And finally, a sociological question on the role of the middle classes. Marx foresaw the polarisation of society in the direction of an increase in the number of the proletarian poor, and the increasing wealth of the capitalist class. He supposed (except in two passages in Theories of Surplus Value) that the middle class would gradually disappear, mostly into the ranks of the working class. On this point, the theory has been clearly disproved by history. Development has been quite different, with extremely important economic consequences: the middle classes, who will still exist in the socialism of the future, constitute a basis for the development of capital-ism. In this sense, we need a profound revision of Marxism.

Another thesis of Marxism has also been disproved by the historical development of society, namely the theory regarding the increasing pauperisation of the working class. These facts force us to reflect on Marxism and modernise it. Now, a question of a political character: what to do with the state constituted by the dictatorship of the proletariat, without a proletariat? How will the state be under socialism? And a final question related to religion (posed earlier): is religion really the opium of the masses? Given the liberation struggles of many Marxist believers (Christians, Muslims, etc.), one must say that such a definition was born in specific circumstances and conditions, and that it is now an anachronistic definition. To conclude this brief section of examples I shall mention a subject treated at some length earlier: the problem of private ownership of the means of production in the (socialist) society of the future.

It is evident that the list of examples I have mentioned here is limited. I think, however, that the examples given are sufficient to show how thorough an analysis we need, and how much Marxism needs to be modernised. As a result of the advance of science in the mastery of nature, there are as many new problems in the sphere of philosophy as in the field of social life. We can call this situation a crisis of Marxism, but we could also consider it a normal situation in science, and we need to adapt the theory to the new reality. I am convinced that a modernised Marxism will play a great role in the socialism of the future, as a theory and an ideology. The contents of Marxism will depend on the intellectual capacity of those who develop it. As I have already pointed out, this essay is a political and intellectual provocation. I have concentrated on signalling the problems which need to be solved by present-day socialist movements. On some points – inevitably – I have taken a position, given an outline of answers. This is the subjective factor, which is also apparent in the selection and presentation of the problems. It should serve as a catalyst for discussion on the subjects which have been put forward, and if this happens, I shall consider that I have achieved the main goal of my paper.
Who is on the left? Where is the left? What is it? What is a government and a policy of the left? If these questions circulate, sometimes infused with scepticism or directly critical, it is because the simple and familiar landmarks have disappeared. I will leave aside here such old landmarks as the collective ownership of the means of production and exchange, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. They created, nevertheless, a political and trade union culture in the labour movement, which today finds itself bereft of such clear images even though the transformation of society has taken new directions. The perspectives of a government of the left can no longer have that limpid clarity which removes the need for explanation. Socialists today must therefore take fresh bearings, both for themselves and for all progressive forces throughout the world. For make no mistake about it; our struggle must have a global dimension, and what we do today in each of our separate parties we must also do together in our Socialist International.

THE LESSONS OF POWER

But we have to do this in quite new circumstances, because we are in power in several countries, and are likely to remain in power for many years. This fact has important consequences. Certainly, it should not be a shackle on freedom of thought, for though our basic values remain, our systems of action need a thorough rethinking. It is important to recognise that the blind spot in the old socialist doctrines, and Marxism in particular, concerned the question of power, the management of time, the role of money, in human life. I think we can now agree, in the light of our past and present practice, upon several lessons, which I will summarise very briefly. We have to know how to act on the terrain of reason, and we have finally overcome a curse laid upon the left by demonstrating that we too have the capacity to govern. But we have not yet concerned ourselves sufficiently with relating the routine of everyday life to the sphere of the imagination. In order to do this it is no use multiplying promises; we have to propose some major choices and to succeed.

This has to be done, however, while avoiding two illusions; first, obviously, that of acting as a single country, or secondly, as a single majority. None of the major problems which confront us, or will confront us, can find a real solution outside a European approach. These two observations have important implications. They require us to define clearly the ways and means of democratic change in our societies, and in short to give
substance to the notion of compromise. The main difficulty, today as in the past, has to do with the obstacles to establishing in a durable manner contractual social relations. In present-day society, therefore, our governments should seek the support of public opinion, despite all the difficulties which this poses. All reflection on the respective roles of government, the party, the trade unions, and other associations, has to take this into account if it is to be really fruitful.

'L'AGGIORNAMENTO'

Socialist 'modernisation' will have a better chance of opening up new horizons for us if it is based on a well-founded system of action. Living in an open world and a market economy obliges us to understand and take into account their rules, and if I say 'take into account' rather than 'respect', that is because not all these rules deserve respect. Certainly we are aware of their injustice and brutality, but we should also recognise their efficacy. Communism imploded because it failed to do so.

Our acceptance of the market economy cannot be either blind or resigned. It should be direct, in order to gain all the advantages, and lucid, to combat those excesses which we can attenuate or remove. But the resulting complexity obscures what is at stake and sometimes confuses the nature of the phenomenon. Historical development has led us from an administrative vision of social justice to a more restrained kind of capitalism, and naturally that poses greater doctrinal problems for the socialist tradition than for the liberal one. This moderated capitalism is neither an aspiration nor a choice, but a fact, and it is important to emphasise that what has made it possible is decades of working-class struggle, and victories bought at a great price.

In effect, socialism was originally a moral appeal for greater justice. The first socialists, with their workingmen’s clubs, friendly societies and cooperatives, frequently thought of the transformation of society in an idealistic way and without regard to the system of production. Marxist analyses, with the idea that everything would be settled by the abolition of private ownership of the means of production and exchange, led finally, through the work of later Marxists such as Lenin and Jules Guesde, to the belief that a centralised command system could take the place of decentralised economic actors. The historical failure is evident. Since the interwar period socialists have chosen a different path, which can be summarised in the notion of a mixed society. But without attempting to draw up a balance sheet of the whole of this complex history we shall still need to confront it for a long time. I do not believe in parties without a history, and our project will not dispense with it.

THE COLLECTIVE WILL

Our values, which we have reaffirmed from congress to congress, are not in question, but their adaptation to complex current situations sometimes makes them less apparent. There is, however, a central irreducible point, to which all other issues are attached, at the heart of our action and of the perspectives of my government; namely, that we socialists believe in the possibility and the value of a collective will, whereas liberalism, even in its more moderate forms, continues fundamentally to give priority to the action of individuals, conceived on the model of economic actors, and denies to human beings the possibility of exercising a conscious control over their collective destiny.

Individualism does not shock us, but we refuse to see in humanity nothing more than an aggregate of individuals, just as, in contrast to liberals, we do not believe that spontaneous interaction among these individuals is sufficient to create a harmonious order. On the contrary, the abandonment of regulation always produces a growth of inequality and the loss of all social cohesion. Only a collective will is intelligent and powerful enough to make the interest of all prevail over the egoism of each. I am profoundly shocked every day by the absurd dramas resulting from the lack of organisation of our planet. Poverty, underdevelopment are all problems for which one can see solutions that are rationally conceivable and beneficial to everyone, but the absence or inadequacy of a collective will strong enough to dominate their complexity remains a major obstacle.

It is for the state, and those who direct it in the legislature and executive, to bring forth this will and enable it to overcome the obstacles. And it is a real international public authority which will have the responsibility for accomplishing this on an international level. I should like to recall here that the Hague appeal, initiated by France and signed by 24 nations, envisages for the first time a world authority to protect the atmosphere, and the preparatory work is now going on. The cre-
ation of such an authority would be a juridical event of the first importance. We have begun with the environment, but there are many other problems of common interest, among them interest rates, international debt, and so on.

POLITICAL ACTION TODAY

In fostering the collective will and helping to make it effective the role of parties is clearly essential, and I am tired of hearing that hackneyed theme of the obsolescence of parties. There are no alternative forms. But a party, parliament and government cannot achieve everything simply because they possess the legal instruments of power. This point is crucial for us, but also for the inheritors of the communist tradition, and we have to find a common understanding.

Above all, in a modern democracy such as ours, the elected representatives cannot legitimately or justifiably desire anything other than what is desired by the citizens. Legitimacy is a question of democracy, justification a matter of lucidity. We have to do with citizens who are collectively intelligent. Despite the non-rationality of individual motivations the miracle of democratic alchemy, enlightened by political debate, produces the phenomenon, as I once wrote (following many others, no doubt), that nobody is more intelligent than everybody. And the people, who are those concerned, are well able to make us understand the difference between what they want, what they reject, or what is a matter of indifference.

There is a classic example, in France, with respect to the abolition of capital punishment and the question of private education. Opinion polls showed that the French people were equally critical on both issues. But even if they were hostile they did not mobilise against the abolition of capital punishment, and tolerated it where they did not accept it. On the other hand they mobilised on a massive scale to express – and make effective – their rejection of what they regarded as putting in question private education, or rather a fundamental liberty, whereas the government’s project at that time was conceived in the perspective of a profound renovation of the educational system.

Let us add that in Europe it is a matter of literate, educated and politicised peoples who are rarely duped, and then not for very long; who have learned to detect both lies and semi-truths, to discern ulterior motives, and to evaluate the personalities behind the media images. As Jean Jaurès said: 'Universal suffrage is the light in which every power is obliged to manifest itself, every consciousness to reveal itself. Ruses can only succeed there for an hour.'

At a time when everyone holds forth on the divorce between the people and their representatives my own analysis is quite different. The electors do not really reproach politicians for what they are, but for what they claim to be; namely the possessors of some objective truth. Politicians, both of the right and the left, have never entirely liberated themselves from this conception – which Leninism carried to an extreme and dramatic degree – in terms of which they see themselves and act as the conscious, organised vanguard of the popular masses, knowing better than they do what are their interests, and regarding it as a duty and an honour to impose upon them social changes which the people are not sufficiently clear-sighted to desire spontaneously.

REFORMS

Naturally, I exaggerate somewhat. But how many times have we seen decisions extolled as courageous merely because they were badly received. It requires no great courage to impose something when one has the legal power to do so. In fact, we must take account of how democracy has changed and matured.

From this double conviction – that the people are more intelligent than any single individual, and that they know what they want, or more particularly what they do not want – I derive two ideas which I always have in mind in the conduct of government: difficult measures are not necessarily unpopular measures, but unpopular measures are always bad measures, either in themselves, or because one has not known how to explain their advantages. In order to explain and convince, every party has to grasp the major trends of public opinion. Difficult measures and unpopular measures are not synonymous. When an effort is required from citizens they always respond once they recognise its necessity and its justice. They are adults who certainly do not enjoy injections, but who thank the doctor for them; not children who hate both the needle and the person who holds it.

It follows from this that the changes we desire to introduce, if they are to be durable and profound, must follow a rhythm which the country
accepts, never less rapid but also never too rapid. This does not mean that parties have to follow public opinion. On the contrary, they must go ahead of it, enlightening it and furnishing it with ideas and proposals. Further, this does not mean that there will be no reforms, but only that they will be made in a different way and will not be undone again. I have had for a long time an inkling of a thesis which my present functions have largely confirmed. For a reform to be immediately designated such, two cumulative conditions are necessary: that it should pass through law and through conflict. If one of the two conditions is lacking the reform is hardly mentioned, but if both are present it is identified, and it matters little if the reform is badly applied, deals only with superficial aspects and eventually founders when there is a change of government.

Let us note, to take the French case, that half the laws passed since the beginning of the Fifth Republic have no known application today! Regarding laws which were badly framed and inapplicable, those which were well framed but the decrees applying them followed very slowly, and those which succeeding governments repealed, one finds a statistical law: the laws which become well-established and transform social reality are generally those that have a large majority, though they are not for all that the outcome of a general consensus. The abolition of capital punishment was passed by a large majority, but no majority other than ours would ever have passed it.

All the members of a government have had this experience. They have introduced reforms, the immediate importance of which is understood only by experts, but what does that matter? The main thing is that they have made the reforms and these reforms have been successful. I prefer that a reform should be known by its consequences rather than by its announcement. Of course, there is a reverse side of this coin; namely, that such relative and necessary discretion may give the impression of immobility or excessive prudence. But this is another reason for declaring what is being done, and why. In the era of flamboyant polemics the spectacle was assured, and though it might lack substance it was at least boisterous. But in the end the actors had to suffer for it. We are now in a new era, and as an English commentator, Theodore Zeldin, has observed: 'In discovering wisdom France has also discovered boredom.' If, as I hope, the wisdom is lasting, I am quite convinced that the boredom is merely temporary. It is only a transition to new habits, and if we do what is necessary, to a strengthened relation between the citizens and politics.

A NEW AGE OF DEMOCRACY

In the European countries the working-class movement has fashioned a particular form of democracy. We are the inheritors of this reality, in which it was essentially the conflict between classes that constituted the basis of political division, and the parties could create around themselves a mode of life in which their relations with the electorate had the character of a cultural community and remained extremely stable. This period of democracy placed the social question at the centre of political life, and gave to the state a major role in registering social realities.

Today, however, democracy is becoming increasingly a system in which the people exist autonomously and do not assign to any other agency the function of their self-expression. Social conflict is no longer the only factor determining political divisions. The conflicting elements are diverse, the mass media have an undeniable homogenising function, and opinions are no longer formed in separate social milieux. The volatility of the electorate is the inevitable result.

This does not mean that parties have lost their role, but we have to understand the new situation. Let us not succumb to nostalgia, and still less to lamentation, for if we reflect on the matter the new relationship which is being established between parties, the electorate, public opinion and trade unions gives the politician new opportunities for initiative and action. The social structure is no longer simply reflected in political struggles, and it is up to us to grasp in a given situation the relevant divisions, in order to obtain a political majority and create a public space for debate.

Public opinion plays an important role and it is our task to make good use of it, and above all to develop forms of militancy that are close to it. Pierre Mauroy reminds us frequently of the necessity for the French Socialist Party to pass beyond the role of a cadre party with a mere 200 000 members to at least 400 000 members. In order to achieve this let us develop the kind of militancy that involves being close to people; and in this context I have no hesitation in talking of social conviviality. Let us recognise that the role of the modern media does not imply any renunciation of militancy, but only that its forms can
no longer be the same as they were when news and information were much less widely diffused.

OUR OPPONENTS AND OURSELVES

We have, first of all, to identify our ideological opponents, two of which stand out. There is liberalism which rejects the collective will, and nationalism which directs it into hatred of others. Once we put the formation and exercise of a collective will at the centre of our approach it is clear that this is incompatible with the ideas of those who think they have discovered the philosopher's stone in the exclusive virtue of individual initiative. Who, if not a public authority, can take care of the satisfaction of collective needs and of preparing the future? And how can such an authority fulfil its tasks if the means thereto are continually questioned in principle: financial means with reference to which taxation is disputed at the same time as more investment is demanded; juridical means, where deregulation is praised while the self-effacement of the state is denounced; criticism of the recruitment of additional civil servants when simultaneously there is a demand for better treatment of the users of public services. There is a battle to be won here in order to restore public authority.

Just as socialists should recognise without soul-searching the efficiency of the market, so also they should set out clearly the limits of the market and define those goods which it does not provide, either for industrial or for less-developed countries.

The bad habits of our opponents are not confined to internal politics. With respect to the European Community they dream aloud of a Europe which would be aligned to the policies of the least advanced members, taking as a common denominator that is to be made into a rule a social plan which offers the least protection, a more rapid advance of workers' rights, and a fiscal policy. Others among us make the opposite wager, on continued progress despite its possible costs, because it is when democracy plays a full part in the construction of Europe that our desire for social justice will truly shape reality. The Gulf crisis shows in another way the necessity of Europe. The US cannot continue to be the world's only policeman! Because of this need for Europe I think that the process of unification must be accelerated, even though we may lose a few battles. We have to do everything possible to bring about the emergence of a European collective will.

But it follows from the logic of those who reject any national exercise of public authority that they also reject it at the European level. We can and must explain this repeatedly, and continually sharpen our criticisms, which extend much further. Yes, we recognise and appreciate the dynamism of the market economy; but no, we do not intend to accept money as the sole reference point. We remain attached to an ethic of life in society, of productive activity, which money by itself disregards. What is more profitable than the traffic in drugs? What is more enterprising than a takeover bid? What is more untamed than speculation? It is these cancers which are produced by the ground rules of liberalism when it operates freely, and we should denounce and attack them over a wide geographical area.

Above all, the exertions of the collective will should be directed to restoring an ethical dimension to the rules of social life. The pseudoromanticism of the 1960s and 1970s was followed, almost without a break, by the cynical flaunting of wealth in the 1980s. During this time those who showered lyrical praise upon Fidel Castro or on the hit-parade of Fortune magazine remained unmoved by the miracle of Spain's emergence from its dictatorship. Yet our friends in the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) showed an extraordinary democratic ingenuity and a true civic
courage in the art of compromise without any backward step. We need to give the struggles we undertake a 'lyrical' dimension, and it is their global character which can provide this. If we need heroes who excite the imagination let us find them among those who have improved the lives of the people who chose them, rather than in the mystique of sterile armed conflict or the successes of junk-bond speculators.

Four great ideologies have characterised the present century in Europe. Fascism lost the Second World War, and communism lost the Cold War. Only the two ideologies which were born before this century, and will outlast it, remain: socialism and liberalism. Neither one nor the other is now what its founding fathers conceived, and if we do not recognise this we shall condemn ourselves to a continually defensive attitude. It is on the basis of reaffirmed values, redefined democracy, and renovated practices that the socialist project will, I am sure, be that which the citizens of Europe will again choose for the coming century.
THE CURRENT SITUATION AND THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM*

Ernest Mandel

The crisis of socialism is an indisputable fact.¹ For over 150 years, socialism has been identified with a school of thought and action which seeks to replace bourgeois society with a radically different and fundamentally better society. Obviously, better does not mean perfect. With the exception of some short-lived sects, the vast majority of tendencies which vindicate socialism have never been guilty of the millennarianism of which adversaries have constantly accused it. It is not a matter of establishing a 'paradise on earth' or of putting an end to the drama of mankind once and for all. Much less is it a matter of inspiring 'an end to history'. On the contrary, for Marx, Engels, and many socialist thinkers, socialism meant an end to prehistoric times for human-kind, the beginning of the true history of our species; and an end to the contemptible drama in the course of which human beings are forced to fight and kill one another as a consequence of wretched problems of subsistence and petty interests.

Socialists were unanimous in their desire to create a society in which the fundamental defects of bourgeois society and class divisions would be eliminated. Their goal was a society without exploitation, without oppression, without violence, without injustice or discrimination with regard to any group of individuals; a society in which cooperation and solidarity would replace competitive struggle and thirst for personal wealth as the fundamental motivation for social behaviour. The elimination of all private property in the means of production and exchange, and economic planning, were considered to be prerequisites. However, although essential, they would be insufficient to reach the goal of socialism. This was a coherent project for social change, for social revolution in the profound sense of the term rather than the limited equation of revolution and violence. The project was common to all socialists, regardless of their political and strategic differences, until well into the 1920s, and for some until several decades later. It was also characteristic of a majority of their most important allies – those fighting for the liberation of the masses in the colonies and quasi-colonies. I will give an example to illustrate this: at the outbreak of the great economic crisis of the 1930s, the almost unanimous response of the entire socialist movement was to combat the capitalist crisis through economic planning, whether socialist, democratic or national, according to the particular tendency.

Since the outbreak of the capitalist economic depression in the early 1970s,² a large majority of the tendencies, party leaders, and members who claim to be socialists, whether in the West, South

¹ This is a shortened version of the original article written in August 1989.
or East of the globe, are not responding in this manner, or are doing so unwillingly. The tendency to which I belong is still providing this response with great conviction, although with new features which were overlooked during the period 1930–55. But it is not in any way indulging in wishful thinking. The crisis of socialism is, thus, the crisis of the credibility of the socialist plan. Five generations of socialists, and three generations of workers, were driven by the profound, unyielding conviction that socialism, as I have defined it, was possible and necessary. The present generation is no longer convinced that this is possible, and is, at least in part, sceptical of the idea that socialism is necessary, and useful. Thus, there is a profound crisis.

2

The crisis of socialism is essentially a crisis in the practices of socialists. This is my first main thesis. It is the result, on the one hand, of the historical failure of Stalinism and post-Stalinism and, on the other hand, of the failure of social democracy, including all the variations of reformist gradualism, such as Eurocommunism or petit-bourgeois nationalism in the Third World. My definition of the crisis of socialism as essentially a reflection of a practical failure is based on four arguments which can scarcely be denied.

First, there is a crisis regarding the credibility of the socialist project in the eyes of the people at large. The actions of the masses have not been motivated by theory. How could the alleged insufficiencies of Marx’s Capital, or Lenin’s What is to be Done? shape the behaviour of tens of thousands of individuals if 95 per cent of them have never read these works? They acquire their convictions and their ways of thinking through their experience, and not from what they read, or from training courses, even though the mass of workers have already been partially freed from the ideological influence of the ruling class, and have achieved different, successive levels of class consciousness. Further, it cannot be proved that communist practice, since at least 1923, or the practice of social democracy, since at least 1914, are in keeping with socialist, let alone, Marxist, theory. How can one explain a disastrous practice as being based on the failures of theory, when this practice itself was established as a break with theory? Thus, in order to judge the validity or the failure of a theory of the future of society, it is necessary, above all, to answer the following questions: is the theory capable of analysing the main socio-economic developments in the long term? Is it capable of forecasting the general course of events which have dominated the history of our century? My unhesitating response to these questions is that it does.

The fourth argument in favour of my main thesis is by far the strongest one. When I refer to the failure of the two great mass tendencies of socialism and of the organised labour movement in this century, I am not referring to ‘errors’, or to small defects, but to crimes of terrifying proportions which have had traumatic effects on tens of millions of human beings. The crimes of Stalinist and post-Stalinist practices are mainly the following: the crushing of Soviet democracy and of all autonomous participation of workers in political life, at least from 1923–4, if not before; the forced collectivisation of agriculture, and the deportation of the gulags, or would-be gulags, under inhumane conditions; the monstrous purges which from 1934 took the lives of at least 1 million communists; the repressive territorial consequences of the Hitler–Stalin pact; the massive purges in the countries occupied or ruled by the Soviets during the period from 1945 to 1953; the military suppression of the Hungarian revolt of 1956; the military occupation of Czechoslovakia in order to suppress the ‘Prague Spring’ of 1968; the bloody repression which accompanied the ‘cultural revolution’ in the People’s Republic of China; the horrors of the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea; the invasion of Afghanistan; the grave decline in social services in the USSR which led to the country being almost alone in the world in experiencing a decrease in life expectancy and an increase in infant mortality in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

But our inquest still concerns only the immediate effects of the crimes committed by Stalin. To be more complete, it would also be necessary to include the indirect effects of the political errors of the Stalinists and post-Stalinists, such as the theory and practice of ‘social-fascism’ in Germany; the destruction of workers’ unity in Spain from September 1936; the position taken towards the anti-Nazi resistance in Poland from 1939 to 1945; the disastrous policies of the Indonesian Communist Party from 1947 to 1965 with regard to the bourgeois army in that country, to mention only cases with the gravest consequences. Once again, millions of human beings lost their lives as a consequence of the political effects of these errors.

The result of the failure evidenced by this
description is striking. But the results of the failure of international social democracy have hardly been less serious or less bloody since 1914. With some honourable exceptions (especially Italy), international social democracy justified and prepared the way for the carnage of the First World War for reasons of ‘national defence’. This carnage not only led to the death of 10 million people, the prime of Europe’s youth, but also defined a break, a turning-point, in contemporary history. From that time on, increasing brutality and violence in political and social life began to be accepted in the metropolitan countries as being inevitable, a matter of fate, about which nothing could be done. Militarism and violence on the part of the state – referred to, rightly, as state terrorism – against which the socialists have been waging battle since the beginning of the nineteenth century, also began to be accepted by socialists, by ‘liberal humanists’, and by an increasing number of social democrats. At the end of this road, with the abandonment by the social democrats of the firm resistance which was symbolised by Jean Jaurès, Rosa Luxemburg, Carl von Ossietzky, and Kurt Tucholsky, is the aftermath of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, the defoliation bombings in Kampuchea and the threat of nuclear extermination.

In 1918–19, German social democracy, in its blind anti-communism, allowed the band of Prussian militarists to have their way, deliberately establishing the Freikorps, out of which sprang the soul of the SA and the SS. It covered up the murders of Karl Liebnecht, Rosa Luxemburg and several tens of thousands of workers. Social democratic governments, or those in which social democracy participated, have organised or defended colonial wars in Indochina, Malaysia, Indonesia and Algeria. They have organised or defended the use of torture, especially in Algeria. They have strictly limited democratic freedoms, especially in India, Indonesia, Egypt, Iraq and Singapore. They have protected and aided the inhumane system of apartheid in South Africa. It fell to the British Labour government to reject the nationalisation of the coal and steel of the Ruhr after 1945, abandoning these natural resources to trusts which had financed and supported Hitler, when two thirds of the population had made it known that they were in favour of this nationalisation, and when this same government had nationalised coal and steel in Britain.

International social democracy has taken part in the Cold War over several decades. It approved the installation of nuclear weapons in Western Europe. It supported NATO. It maintained the division of the labour movement for trivial reasons of anti-communism. Even now, it is hindering the inclusion of the French and Portuguese CGT in a united trade union front within the EEC, which only strengthens the employers’ federation. It is party to all the imperialist efforts to preserve the international economic structures which serve as a basis for the exploitation of Third World countries. It supported, if it did not organise, the policy of austerity of the late 1970s, which was in the interests of big business, in defending and increasing profits by decreasing the real income of wage earners, while also increasing unemployment.

But the historic failure of Stalinism and social democracy is the failure to carry out the socialist transformation of society. After over 150 years of systematic socialist action, after 150 years of effort on the part of organised labour, in spite of innumerable impressive battles and in spite of the tremendous sacrifices made, socialism does not exist anywhere at all in the world.

From this point of view, the biggest ideological favour which could possibly be done for the international bourgeoisie has been that of labelling the hybrid, provisional societies in the USSR, in the People’s Republic of China, in Eastern Europe and in other places as being or having been ‘socialist’. Was this the reason why the men and women of the Paris Commune, the Schutz­bund veterans, the heroes and heroines of the summer of 1936 in Spain, the heroes and heroines of Stalingrad and of the Long March in China fought and died?

On a more commonplace level, but with similar effect, there is the overall result of the historical failure of social democracy. After a century of fighting to win the right to universal suffrage and, through this, to occupy seats in parliament, after numerous speeches on the lines of ‘give us your votes and we will realise your demands’, it is necessary to admit the fact that where there are socialist parliamentary majorities, capitalism marches on. The two most convincing examples are those of Sweden and France (but Austria, Norway, Spain, and Portugal after 1974, could also be used). The ill-fated Olof Palme participated in one of his last electoral campaigns stressing the argument ‘Give us the majority in parliament: if not, the 15 families that are running the economy will also be running the government.’ Following forty years of almost uninter-
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rupted social democratic government up to 1991, these 15 families are still running the national economy. Is this not a failure? In France, in the early 1980s, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party together gained 65 per cent of the seats in Parliament, having been elected by an indisputable absolute majority of the voters, based on the promise of 'change'. The 'change' never came.

3

It is necessary to set out such an inquest precisely to take an inventory of the 150 years of socialist struggle. The failure to achieve the ends it pursues is combined with a no less spectacular success in achieving partial goals. We need to clarify this basic dialectic between failure and success. After more than a century of intense effort through joint struggle, socialists have in fact profoundly modified the reality of society worldwide, even though they have not established a socialist society anywhere. One hundred and fifty years ago, the average working week in capitalist industry was 72 hours or more. Nowadays, it is nearing 36 hours, at least in the most industrialised countries.

One hundred and fifty years ago, salaried workers who were ill, handicapped or unemployed were in dire poverty. Back in 1900, children were still running barefoot through the poor districts of such rich cities as London or New York. Nowadays, both in the East and in the West, minimum social guarantees have made it possible to eliminate this poverty for a majority of wage earners. Trade unionists, socialists and communists began the battle – so far with quite modest results – to achieve the same goal in Third World countries. One hundred and fifty years ago, the vast majority of wage earners – with the exception of a small minority of highly-skilled workers – were men and women without culture, usually illiterate, normally demoralised and frequently drunk. The committed efforts of the labour and socialist/communist movement made it possible for wage earners to have access to basic education, culture, human dignity and self-confidence.

Thus, it cannot be said that the socialists or communists have worked for nothing. Furthermore, it cannot be said that the efforts of the working masses to improve their lot have been in vain. All these efforts have already wrought profound changes in the world. In my opinion, one of the chief transformations which the socialist struggle has achieved worldwide concerns the level of mass consciousness. The acceptance of their lot – because it is traditional – no longer exists among a majority of the working classes around the world. The 'traditional values' generally accepted in 1850, 1900, 1914 are now ridiculed or disdained. The most intelligent, humane groups in the different churches are moving in the same direction.

One might object that the masses do not reject the fundamental values of bourgeois society, that is, the effort of earning more money to improve their lot in material terms, including the acquisition of gadgets constantly appearing on the market in a 'consumer society'. This objection reflects a mistaken scientific analysis. The characteristic of bourgeois society is not money in its use as a means of exchange, or as a means to acquire goods. The fundamental characteristic of this society is the accumulation of capital. In the first case, money is a mere means. Average wage earners would not object, in the least, to having access to the goods and services they desire without using money as a means to acquire them. For example: free health care, on condition that there would be freedom of choice and that the goods and services provided in this manner were of high quality. On the contrary, no capitalist can get rich by exploiting work and his or her fellow human beings as an employer or speculator, nor accumulate a private fortune, nor pass it on to his or her children, if money is not turned into the master of society. This second 'value' is not 'inwardly accepted' or practised by the vast majority of salaried workers. It is precisely a characteristic of capitalism that a limited minority can practise it only if the vast majority cannot do so.

Is there a cause and effect relationship between, on the one hand, the partial reforms and conquests that the socialist labour movement has accumulated over the past century and, on the other hand, the failure to achieve its 'final goal'? The anarchists and certain leftist groups claim that this is so, but their arguments are not valid. It is a debatable question whether most wage earners in the highly developed countries accept the everyday reality of capitalism more readily than before, even though their lot has undeniably improved. This would require a detailed, empirically-based analysis, which included a statistical survey of comparative ways of thinking and behaviour. It would not refute the counter-argument that, periodically, the
masses have more often been moved, in large numbers, in the direction of challenging capitalism, both before and after 1914.

But what decisively refutes the leftist argument is that nowhere in the world have great misery and dire poverty led to a widespread mass movement to overthrow capitalism or to establish a socialist society. The reason for this is obvious. A widespread protest movement against the establishment for the purpose of replacing it with a better society requires a great degree of cohesion, organisation, self-confidence and experience of struggle on the part of the working masses. Such preparation can never result from their impoverishment, their degradation and their desperation. The inclination of the masses to defend partial conquests explains why, in most cases — the United States is, for the time being, the great exception — the voters give reformist or neoreformist parties preference at the polls.

The vast majority of socialists and communists have always supported and tried to lead the struggles for reforms, to gain and consolidate democratic freedoms in the capitalist countries, as well as for the improvement of material conditions. The revolutionary socialists of the tendency to which I belong are continuing this tradition. The reproach which they direct at the social democrats and which must also be increasingly directed against the numerous tendencies which still claim — for how much longer? — to be communist, is that they are abandoning a determined struggle without commitment to essential reforms. The false antinomy 'reform — revolution', 'partial conquests — final goal', which Rosa Luxemburg analysed brilliantly in her most outstanding political works of the period 1900—1910, leads us to a problem lying at the heart of the practical failure of social democracy and Stalinism, namely the social and psychological consequences of the partial conquests in the very heart of the labour movement. They can be summarised in one phrase: the hypertrophy of conservative 'labour' and 'socialist' bureaucracy. For the masses, reforms are achievements which do not necessarily imply acceptance of the establishment. Periodic or constant unemployment, a periodic reduction in the standard of living, periodic wars, periodic crises, and periodic restrictions of democratic freedoms are the calls to order which prevent a lasting integration of this type.

It is not the same for the bureaucracies which stem from the labour movement in the capitalist countries or have usurped the exercise of power in the post-capitalist countries. Socially, these bureaucracies have been integrated decisively into bourgeois society and into the bourgeois state in terms of positions acquired and of a considerable rise in their material situation. In the Eastern countries, the Nomenklatura carried out 'socialism' to a large extent for itself, instead of for the benefit of the people as a whole. But it would mean giving in to trite materialism, even a 'conspiracy theory', diametrically opposed to the materialist interpretation of history, to establish a mechanical, linear, cause and effect relationship between, on the one hand, these undeniable material interests, and the increasingly systematic rejection of the struggle for the final goal which characterises the social democratic and Stalinist (post-Stalinist) bureaucracies.

The solution for changing this behaviour is summarised in the formula of the British left-wing socialist, Aneurin Bevan: 'The function of the socialists is not to exercise power. The function of the socialists is to exercise power in order to carry out their programme. This exercise of power, and all types of 'management socialism' which give rise to decisions contrary to the programme and to measures contrary to the interests of the workers in order to avoid the accusation of being 'regulation-bound', is not a lesser evil, but a major evil. In this respect, Marxist theory was undeniably lacking, and efforts are now being made to overcome this inadequacy. The socialist movement had realised that the risk existed that its own functionaries could turn into the new despotic masters of the masses. But theory cannot move ahead of reality. It needed the traumatic experience which started in 1914 in the capitalist countries, as well as in the post-capitalist ones, to begin to incorporate into working-class consciousness the need for a deeper scientific analysis of the necessary anti-bureaucratic dimension of socialism. In part this is something which has already been achieved.

A distrust of all bureaucracies, including those of large capitalist companies, and of the so-called democratic states, is, at present, more deeply-rooted in the consciousness of the masses than at any other time in the past. This is a step forward, not the reverse. It leads to a growing identification of socialism with self-management, self-organisation and self-determination of the masses. This is not only a return to the original truths and values; it is an essential step forward toward the recovery of the credibility of the socialist project. The final response will obviously depend on practice. To overcome decisively the scepticism of the masses, a new exalting experience of the type of
the Russian Revolution in October 1917, or that of the summer of 1936 in Catalonia, will be necessary, but on a much larger scale, giving rise to social achievements that far surpass those of advanced capitalism, and which enjoy a lasting success. It is probable that the immediate implementation of a halving of the working day by a future socialist government in an important country would act as a detonator. It would ignite the enthusiasm of wage earners worldwide.

A radical reduction of the working day is essential in order to carry out any project of self-management or self-administration. If producer/citizens do not have time to manage their own affairs, society will continue to be divided into administrators and the administered. This reduction is also required in terms of the need to re-establish and preserve full employment under conditions of rapid growth in job productivity and slow economic growth. It also arises out of feminist issues—one must adduce that of the dual workload of earning women—and out of environmental concerns. But this has to do, above all, with a dual objective and subjective transformation which stems fundamentally from the third technological revolution and the accompanying general crisis of bourgeois social relations. Contrary to a myth which is not based on any practical proof, producers are increasingly rejecting the famous (Protestant? Japanese?) 'work ethic'. Work less and improve the quality of your life; this is their main concern, even in Japan. This is the result of the 'revolution in values' I have mentioned previously. It is, above all, the result of a painful everyday experience: the simultaneously exhausting nature and destructive effect on physical and mental health, and on the nervous system, of infernal noise, plus the monotonous and destructive nature of repetitive, non-creative, mechanical tasks.

This is the Achilles heel of late capitalism. It can seek—less successfully than is generally supposed—to integrate the wage earner as a consumer. It can seek, if not to integrate, at least to convince the wage earner as a citizen. But it will fail to integrate the wage earner as a producer. The very nature of capitalism implies that workers cannot be free and self-governing. Free work is work which one controls and determines for oneself, with workers who decide for themselves what they will produce and how they will produce it. This can only be accomplished by a system of freely-associated producers within a socialist system. It is impossible in the capitalist system which implies the control of capital over salaried work. This subjective requirement also responds to an objective need. Following the third technological revolution, an increased physical effort on the part of workers as a source of growth is irrational from a 'purely' economic point of view. At present, the growth of job productivity, not to mention macro-economic 'upgrading', is 99 per cent a function of the nature and quality of the means of rational, that is to say, planned, organisation of stocks and flows, and of the skill, attention and sense of responsibility of workers.

The greatest economic failure both of capitalism and of the former bureaucratic or bureaucratic/commercial management systems lies in their inability to arouse this attention and this sense of responsibility on the part of their workers. These workers obstruct such efforts, given that experience has taught them that they will be the ones who pay the price, sooner or later, while others will reap the benefits. The effort of Japanese capitalists to resolve this problem through 'teamwork' and 'quality control circuits' leads to the same failure for the same reason: workers do not want to break their backs for nothing. Only a system of freely-associated producers can develop the rational, realistic control stemming from individual and group responsibility, without which a good part of the potential of the new technologies will go to waste. This liberation calls precisely for a radical revolution in terms of working hours, hours of training (qualification, information, education), leisure, throughout life. Practical experience thus confirms how well founded was the prediction made by Marx in the Grundrisse, according to which, based on a certain technological/scientific development, free time and not the time spent at work becomes the source and measure of wealth.

In short: we continue to live in a capitalist system, and in the end, power is always in the hands of big business. The consequences of this power are disastrous for millions of human beings, and they risk being catastrophic. The socialist battle must combine the struggle to improve the immediate lot of the exploited and oppressed with a systematic preparation for reversing this power.

4

The loss of credibility of the socialist project has occurred at a time when the need for socialism is greater than ever. In the past, the alterna-
The prime threat is most easily detected in the form of a nuclear war. But this is not the only possibility. Nuclear power plants have been in existence for a long time, and any world war employing conventional weapons might have the same effect. Biological and chemical weapons run the same risk. The very concept of 'conventional weapons' has lost much of its meaning when preparations are being made for the manufacture of non-nuclear bombs and missiles which possess a destructive force equal to, or greater than, the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Not to mention the 'death rays' and other tempting toys for the military and armchair strategists.

The second threat is also becoming increasingly evident. An environmental awareness is not a luxury for wealthy countries. Environmental degradation poses a real threat for all humankind. It took place massively in the former USSR and in Eastern Europe, and is taking place in Brazil, in Mexico and in India. Certain experts, and they are not a minority, believe that this catastrophe is more imminent than the threat of extermination as a result of war.

The third threat is unfortunately recognised much less, even in leftist circles. But the inhabitants of the southern hemisphere are obviously not unaware of it, as two examples will illustrate: According to UNICEF, in the Third World countries, 16 million children die of hunger and curable disease every year. Five times this mortality rate equals all the casualties of the Second World War. Each one of these five year periods is a world war against the children of the Third World. This is the real result of the functioning of the international capitalist economy. In the poorest Third World countries, half the inhabitants have a nutrition level which has dropped since the beginning of the economic depression to some 1700 calories per day. This is the level of undernourishment of a Nazi concentration camp in 1940, that is to say, before the appearance of the death camps as such.

The fourth threat is perceived by some inhabitants of the metropolitan countries as a tangible reality. It suffices to visit the 'barrios' of Harlem or Bedford-Stuyvesant in New York, or slums in Liverpool or Glasgow, not to mention Naples or Palermo. The spectacle of immigrant workers doing 'temporary work' in certain sections of Paris, where they wait patiently to be hired by the hour, with no social insurance whatsoever, as well as 'day labourers', sums up this sad situation. The long-term consequences for the working class as a whole have not yet been fully realised. Let me point out that there are already indications of a 40 per cent unemployment rate – or more – among young blacks and Puerto Ricans in the US, and that the aftermath of misery, low morale and degradation accompanying this social regression is already under way. Let me also point out that a slow wearing down of democratic freedoms in the metropolitan countries is paralleled by a constant questioning of democracy in the Third World. According to Amnesty International tor-
ture is systematically employed, and even institutionalised, in over 60 countries. Some accept this gloomy panorama, but add, 'it is too late. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse will overwhelm us for certain.' They are not correct. There is no proof whatsoever that humankind has lost its ability to stop its progress towards the abyss, to master the technology that it has created, to put it under its control, to stop the stockpiling of weapons and finally stop their manufacture, to re-establish the threatened ecological balance, to free and cure the masses of poor in the Third World. The ability is there. To put it into practice, a will to act, a plan of action and, above all, real power (economic and political power) are necessary.

In contrast to those defending the 'extermination' thesis are those who accuse revolutionary Marxists of having a 'doomsday attitude'. They do not deny the dangers I have just mentioned, but argue that they are not so serious; that they are nothing more than marginal trends; that governments and experts, in their wisdom, are going to alleviate them; and that everything will turn out fine in the end. This is an extension of the old debate - now in its third phase - which the labour movement has experienced for the past century, and in the final analysis, amounts to the opposition between 'reformists' and 'revolutionaries'. According to Eduard Bernstein, the father of social democratic gradualism, the fundamental tendency of our century would be a progressive reduction in the internal contradictions of bourgeois society, especially of its explosive contradictions. There would be progressively fewer economic crises. They would be progressively less serious. There would thus be fewer social tensions, fewer dictatorships and more democracy. There would be fewer wars and violent conflicts of all types. There would, of course, be fewer revolutions, or none at all in the 'civilised' countries.

The opposite theory was that defended mainly by Rosa Luxemburg, who argued that in spite of a temporary diminution of the capitalist contradictions during some phases - today, we could add: the 'long shock waves' - the fundamental trend of our century will be that of a worsening, rather than a diminishing, of the internal contradictions of bourgeois society. There would be economic crises more serious, rather than less serious, than those of the nineteenth century. There would be more dictatorships and more revolutions. There would be, above all, more wars and more violence, infinitely more destructive than in the nineteenth century.

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, it was Rosa Luxemburg who was right, and not Bernstein. Let us indicate the fateful dates: 1914, 1917, 1918–19, 1920, 1922 (Mussolini's rise to power), 1925–7 (Second Chinese Revolution); 1929, 1931 (the Japanese attack on Manchuria); 1933, 1935 (Italy attacks Ethiopia), 1936, 1937, 1939, 1942–3 (famine in Bengal), 1945, 1946–7 (problems of partition in India, and the first Arab–Israeli War), 1949, 1950 (the Korean War), 1954 (revolt and war in Algeria), 1956 (the Suez War), 1959 (the victory of the Cuban Revolution), 1962 (American intervention in Indochina), 1967 (the third Arab–Israeli War), May student protest in France in 1968, the 'hot' autumn of 1969 in Italy, 1970–3 (revolutionary uprising followed by Pinochet's coup d'état in Chile, 1973 (new war between Israel and Egypt), 1974–5 (the Portuguese Revolution, the first widespread economic recession), 1978 (the Iranian Revolution), 1979 (victory of the Nicaraguan Revolution), 1980–2 (the second widespread recession), 1987 (stock market crash), and this is not all. There has not been one single year without war since 1935. There have been 80 wars since 1945. Has the cause not been realised? At least with regard to the analysis of our century, it is the revolutionaries who are being realistic. It is the conciliating reformists who appear to be the dreamers.

There is no sign indicating the possibility of sudden change in this trend towards the worsening of the internal contradictions of late capitalism. When Gorbachev's most 'revisionist' advisers met with the most moderate social democrats to announce in all seriousness that the twenty-first century will be marked by reconciliation and collaboration among classes, and not by prolonged and graver class struggle, one must respond by asking on which planet they are living. Their wishful thinking is profoundly utopian. The British historian Eric Hobsbawm, who has lately joined the ranks of the new reformists after having been an apostle of Stalinism for decades, says that the October Revolution and the founding of the Communist International were both errors, as they were based on three false hypotheses: the fall of capitalism; the extension of the revolution to Germany; and the possibility of establishing socialism in one country. The third hypothesis, attributed to Lenin, is obviously untrue, being a contradiction of the former two. The first and second hypotheses are classic sophisms which consist of formulating a thesis in deliberately exagger-
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ated terms to make it absurd. Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades predicted neither the fall of capitalism nor the secure victory of the German revolution. The result of these crises would fundamentally depend upon the ‘subjective factor’, including the policies followed by the socialist and communist parties. How are these predictions erroneous?

Finally, there are those who, agreeing with a good part of my diagnosis, come to diametrically opposed conclusions. They are to be found among the most ‘orthodox’ communists in the capitalist countries and in Eastern Europe; among some left-wing social democrats and, above all, among some ‘Greens’ and radical feminists. Their reasoning is as follows: now that we are threatened with suicidal catastrophes, the ruling class, which does not wish to commit suicide, will finally listen to reason. It will accept a radical, peaceful solution to the gravest conflicts and crises. Undeniably, monopolistic big business is fully aware of the fact that a world war would mean suicide. It does not conceive war as being a last resort in solving the economic crisis, as it was considered to be in 1914 and in 1939. It is thus possible and useful to take the first steps along the path to nuclear disarmament and to salvaging the environment in collaboration with these governments.

The error arises from making abusive generalisations from the limited, provisional successes of collaboration efforts. Imperialism is clearly interested in avoiding nuclear suicide, and therefore in limiting the arms race to some extent. But it has no interest whatsoever in calling a complete halt to this race, nor even in a substantial slowdown. The interests of the ‘military-industrial complex’ are opposed to it. Above all, during a prolonged period of economic depression, weapons production becomes a ‘substitute market’ par excellence, as Rosa Luxemburg had predicted since before the First World War, and as experience has taught us since 1914. On the other hand, the essential maintenance of nuclear arms continues to be axiomatic dogma on the part of most bourgeois governments, including social democratic ones. The error lies in seriously underestimating the risks of a nuclear war arising out of limited ‘local’ military conflicts, and from the proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as the risks of a nuclear explosion resulting from error, incorrect information or hasty decisions. As long as nuclear weapons and power plants exist anywhere in the world, these risks will exist. Although they are considered to be borderline risks, is this reasonable? Is it responsible to jeopardise the physical survival of humankind on the hypothesis that this borderline will never be crossed? The error also lies in trusting that the staff of the political leaders in power in those capitalist countries equipped with nuclear weapons undoubtedly comprise rational statesmen.

I am aware of at least one case – that of Germany – in which the ruling class allowed, or even preferred, to exercise its power through an unscrupulous, unrestrained soldier of fortune, ready to take the risk of destroying his country, his regime, and committing suicide himself. I do not doubt that they would have used nuclear weapons even on their own soil, even in an overkill situation. Japan in the summer of 1945 was on the brink of falling prey to suicidal individuals of the same type. Who can assure us that such a situation will never occur again in some country equipped with nuclear arms? Would this not mean once again risking the physical survival of the human race in a moment of desperation? Is this not profoundly irrational and irresponsible?

In order to overcome decisively the dangers of war, the threats posed for the environment, the hunger and misery in the Third World, the risks of a ‘dual society’ in the metropolitan countries, it is necessary to put all the technological, economic and social developments of the world under responsible human control. This means overcoming short and medium-term calculations and advantages, and the sovereign rights of nation states, which is obviously incompatible with a system based on private property, competition and greed for personal gain. The contradiction between the search for partial rationality and the reproduction of a periodically explosive and destructive global irrationality is inherent in this system.

Now what is common to all who adopt reformist, neo-reformist, and pseudo-conciliatory solutions for the crisis in which humankind finds itself is that they imply the preservation of the capitalist system, no matter what justifying concepts are used (‘mixed economy’, ‘feasible socialism’ as in Alec Nove, etc.). The erudite, brilliant social democratic theorist, Michael Harrington, reached conclusions and propositions in his last work16 that the New York Times described as being reformed capitalism. But this cannot halt the race towards the abyss. It is often said that to prevent the threatened catastrophe, a true revolution in our way of thinking, a moral revolution, is necessary, to overcome, once and for all, the ‘double standard’ in human behaviour, according to which
either one is part of the 'in-crowd' or outside it. In Freudian terminology, the tendency towards destruction (Thanatos) must be decisively overpowered by the tendency towards controlled, civilised pleasure (Eros tempered by the alter ego). But history teaches us that the 'double standard', the application of different ethical norms to the members of the 'in-crowd' (whether gangs, clans, social classes, ethnic groups or states) and the 'out-crowd', does not stem from innate evil or from original sin. It is fundamentally the result of conflicting interests and the perception of them.

The desire to overcome the 'double standard' through the maintenance of a social structure based on competition and on the aggressive seeking of personal privileges is the worst of all delusions. Only a social order based on cooperation, solidarity and responsible, democratic control of economic development creates the possibility – I cannot promise more – of overcoming the 'double standard'. Socialism, as I have defined it, is necessary, but is it possible? It certainly is. Above all because capitalism is causing, and will cause, a series of crises which will make its destruction imminent. It is, because capitalism itself has already created the essential economic and cultural conditions for its own demise: the human and material productive forces capable of setting up a worldwide system of freely-associated producers.

But two additional, essential prerequisites for the realisation of socialism are lacking. The first is socio-political: the will to work in this direction on the part of a mass of women and men who possess sufficient potential force. The second is political and organisational: their ability to succeed in this difficult undertaking. Neither of the two conditions is guaranteed today. Neither is the automatic result of the maturing of 'objective conditions', or of the seriousness of the crisis of civilisation. Both will progress slowly and gradually over a long period of time. This is a matter of creating the essential subjective conditions for the victory of socialism. In determining them, the effects of economic development on the numerical force and the social potential of classes and class fractions are intertwined with the effects of economic, political and cultural progress in the consciousness of the masses; the importance of material interests and the experiences gained from them; the interaction between these experiences, these ways of thinking; the (delaying or stimulating) influence of political parties and trade unions, with regard to the acquisition of this awareness, and many more.

The working class, in the Marxist sense of the word, is the only social force in the world today which has the potential to eliminate capitalism. This is the third main thesis of my diagnosis regarding the status and the future of socialism. I refer to the historical tendency, not to specific situations, countries, or areas. The relocation of companies can lead to a decline – if limited – in the number of wage earners in the 'old' industrialised regions, which is more than compensated by the expansion of the number of wage earners in the regions and countries now undergoing industrialisation. The spectacular growth in the number of workers employed in offices, the growing feminisation of the proletariat – positive phenomena – are accompanied by negative phenomena, such as the alarming expansion of the poor sectors of the working class living on the fringes of society, which Marx referred to as his 'Lazarus groups'. If one wishes to avoid dull eclecticism, it is necessary to talk frankly about which of the opposed tendencies will prevail worldwide in the long term. Most of the empirical data available to me at present point to the conclusion that the evolution will be towards the growth rather than the weakening of the proletariat, towards homogenisation rather than heterogeneity. The emergence of workers in the public utilities sector as one of the most combative and effective sectors in the union movement constitutes a confirmation of this historical tendency.

It is accompanied by the appearance of new labour strongholds in telecommunications centres, in public transport (including airlines and airports) and in hospitals, in banks and even in the education system. These strongholds bring together thousands, sometimes tens of thousands, and even, on a regional and national level, hundreds of thousands of workers progressively better organised, with an ability to bring the capitalist economy to a halt, and to 'question' bourgeois society, which is impressive. In fact, it is greater than that of the 'old' labour bastions. A general strike in the iron and steel industry, or in the car manufacturing industry does not bring the national economy to a standstill. By contrast, a general strike in the electrical, telecommunications or banking sector would in all probability, bring it to a screeching halt.

This is what is meant, of course, when reference is made to the objectively anti-capitalist potential of the action taken by labour: the capacity to bring the capitalist economy as a whole to a halt, to interrupt the functioning, in practice, of the bourgeois rules, to replace it as the organising force of
economic life. Working people already comprise over 90 per cent of the active population in the most highly-industrialised countries, and some 80 per cent in numerous other countries. Who would be capable of neutralising this amazing striking force once it got under way? It may be objected that strikes in the public utilities sector can be broken more easily, or can even be prohibited by law. They are unpopular amongst those who use these services, especially those who live on low incomes. But with their exemplary, practical common sense, the workers have already found a suitable, spectacular answer to this threat: the response of active strikes. The ‘public’ reacts negatively to the fact that hospital services are slow, that the electricity is cut off, that the underground and local trains run late, that their children have to stay at home because teachers are on strike. But the ‘working public’ shows solidarity with the strikers if the underground and local trains operate – but free of charge; if the hospitals are operating full-time – but completely free, and without the filling-in of administrative forms; if their children go to school – but the teachers teach classes based on topics other than those included in the official programmes. The ‘public’ will applaud the strikers if, instead of cutting off the electricity, they simply refuse to register the meter readings.

The active strike of the public utilities sector combines two tendencies, which can be demonstrated empirically, in the behaviour (or the way of thinking) of today’s proletariat: that of not going beyond immediate concerns (in short, only obtaining specific improvements for the workers of the public utilities sector, not doing away with the capitalist system);19 and a certain disrespect for traditional bourgeois values. When these tendencies merge within the framework of an inter-professional general strike which lasts for over 24 or 48 hours, they give rise to a true power counteracting that of the state; that is to say, a situation of dual power. This is the model which all revolutionary crises will follow in a highly industrialised country.

One of the most destructive theories of traditional social democracy, later adopted by modern social democracy, as well as by Stalinists and post-Stalinists, is the functional ‘division of tasks’ among parties and unions. It is considered that the latter should deal exclusively with the immediate, real demands of the workers, while the former would only ‘take care of politics’, that is to say, of elections, parliament and government. In practice, this excludes all extra-parliamentary direct action on the part of the masses.20 Even worse, it excludes the working class from any type of political activity, save that of voting. This makes politics the private domain of the staffs of the political parties. This theory is based on a sophism: the unions are considered to represent particular, and even ‘corporatist’ interests, while parliamentary groups and the democratic governments represent ‘the will (sovereignty) of the people’. But this fraudulent aspect is uncovered when it is shown that Members of Parliament, and the governments elected on ‘X’ electoral platform take it upon themselves to make ‘X-Y’ or even ‘non-X’ decisions. Who gave them the power to do so? The sophists can easily be exposed by demanding that they include the right of referendum by popular initiative in their constitutions; that unions, workers and all important citizen interest groups have the right to present specific demands to the voters. Why not the ‘X’ of the electoral platform forgotten by ‘the’ party? In this case, their fear of the voters might curb rash promises, and possibly the indiscriminate abandonment of them. The extra-parliamentary actions taken by the masses, which assume a clear political dimension during an active general strike, make it possible gradually to overcome the ‘apolitical nature’ of the masses in practice. All those who refer to this apoliticism in order to justify their substitutionalism are doing everything possible to preserve and consolidate it. One of the main merits of Marx was that, unlike the first socialists and the first revolutionary communists, such as Gracchus Babeuf, he linked the ‘socialist project’ indissolubly with the independent activity and organisation of the working class. The emancipation of workers would be the job of the workers themselves, not of any supreme saviour, or god, or Caesar or tribune, or government (state), or party. Governments and parties can be regarded as essential instruments of emancipation only to the extent that they enhance and stimulate the independent activity and organisation of the masses. Marx and Engels understood this very well and said it repeatedly, echoed later by Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin from 1905, the young Bukharin, Gramsci and many others. Unless socialism rids itself of all traces of substitutionalism it will continue to be in crisis with its future uncertain.

The general strategy to overcome the crisis of socialism outlined here is not the fantasy of an intellectual in an ivory tower. It generalises a tendency present in the great labour struggles of the past decades: the general strike in Belgium of
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1960–1; the student protest movement of 1968 in France; the ‘hot autumn of 1969’ in Italy; the Portuguese Revolution of 1974–5; the rise of Solidarność in Poland of 1980–1; the great strikes of the 1980s in Brazil; the strike of the Soviet miners in 1989. In all these cases, the tendency to establish a power to counter that of the state was perfectly obvious. This is a tendency, or even ‘embryonic tendency’, not a fully-fledged, conscious reality. My recovery of the ‘socialist project according to Marx’ implies no idealisation whatsoever of the proletariat. I always refer to the real proletariat, simply the way it is, with its good and bad points, both of which are the result of a ‘bad’ society (capitalist society or post-capitalist, bureaucratic society).

For Marx, socialism can only result from the real struggles of that real class, not from the imaginary ones of an ideal class. This class is not sufficiently prepared to build a better society, especially in terms of self-awareness. This is why it needs to be led by an aware, organised avant-garde. That is why I continue to be a confirmed Leninist, provided that Leninism does not take a turn towards substitutionalism. One of the weaknesses of the proletariat has come to light in the course of the last few decades: the difficulties of overcoming the sexism in their ranks which stems from that social institution called the ‘nuclear family’. This is the essential reason why a mass feminist movement has evolved independent of the organised labour movement.

The same can be said of the environmental and anti-nuclear movements, which often encountered real opposition from the union movement, and from sectors of the working class, who viewed them as threatening their jobs. These ‘new social movements’ will have to learn from their own experience that the vital problems for the emancipation and survival of humankind can only be solved if capitalism is abolished. But the main alliance which must be sought is still with the liberation movements of the Third World. To the extent that industrialisation develops, the proletariat will be strengthened by this movement. This is already taking place impressively in South Africa. But the alliance of workers and peasants, and the struggle for agrarian and urban reform are still essential for the victory of these mass movements.

I have already stressed that the tendency towards the strengthening and homogenisation of the proletariat exists worldwide. At first glance this seems to be a grand delusion. Is not nationalism more influential than ever within the international proletariat? Have not the great labour parties and the trade unions, proved themselves to be incapable of working together on an international level? Has ‘proletarian internationalism’ not systematically bowed to serve so-called ‘guardian states’? Is not this setback, maybe even failure, rooted in the different interests of workers in different countries (at times, in different strata of workers in the same country), favoured by enormous differences in salaries maintained by segmented ‘job markets’? This argument undeniably contains an element of truth, but it is made more questionable by the fundamental tendency of capitalism in the late twentieth century: the internationalisation of the productive forces, which inevitably entails, in spite of all state and ideological resistance, the internationalisation of capital and class struggle. At present, the world market is dominated by 700 multinational companies. Their ability to thwart all state politics, all worker/union opposition limited to one sole country, or to a limited number of countries, will increase. This is the objective basis of the necessary, and possible, rebirth of proletarian internationalism, at least in the long run. Socialism will be worldwide or it will not exist at all. To prevent the catastrophes with which we are threatened, a World Socialist Federation is the only valid solution for the future.

If the internationalisation of the productive forces and of capital is the fundamental economic tendency of the coming decades, there will not be a ‘post-industrial society’, not a ‘computer-based society’, nor will the power of experts replace the power of capital, nor will there even be a proletariat. This journal’s original programmatic declaration puts forward the opposite thesis, with which I do not agree. I am participating in the project because I believe that revolutionary socialists should use all opportunities to defend their ideas, and I do so with even greater enthusiasm given that the inability to debate freely differences of opinion within the labour movement has been, without doubt, one of the causes of the crisis of socialism since 1914. Re-establishing a capacity for dialogue without decisive commitments or prior consensus signals a big step forward. This is not only a matter of intellectual concern, but of understanding that democracy within the labour movement is a prerequisite for the uncompromising conflict of ideas always to go hand in hand with the will and the ability to work together in order to achieve common goals against common adversaries.

Once again, this is a matter of stressing the moral conditions for restoring the credibility of socialism. If socialist practice is not in keeping with socialist principles, the masses will react
sceptically. Only socialism is capable of fighting, uncompromisingly and without reservation, for the worldwide conquest and defence of human rights. But this means that socialists must never subordinate these rights to any ‘reason of state’, even in states that they themselves are governing. Which means, above all, that they must guarantee these same rights within the socialist labour movement itself. If socialism recovers its ability to identify itself with the struggle against exploitation, oppression and injustice throughout the world; if it once again acts systematically and consistently with Marx’s categorical imperative not to tolerate any human degradation even though there may be a ‘political price’ to pay; then sometime in the future it will have harnessed an invincible moral and political power.

Notes

1. I have been working for some years now taking stock of a century of debates regarding Marxism. The economic part of this stocktaking is summarised in my ‘Introduction’ to the three volumes of Capital, published by New Left Review/Penguin Books.


3. I support democratic, socialist economic planning, indissolubly linked to democratic pluralism. The working masses must be sovereign and free to determine for themselves the priorities in the allotment of economic resources. A sovereignty of this type is impossible without the freedom to choose between different coherent allocation plans, between several programmes, that is to say, between different parties.

4. But not inevitable of course. Marx and Engels, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky always rejected the idea of the inevitability of socialism. They presented the choice as one between socialism and barbarism.

5. Alec Nove, in The Economics of Feasible Socialism, argues that ‘socialism according to Marx’ cannot be carried out in any way at all (utopian). At the same time, he is sceptical about its usefulness.

6. Deng Xiaoping took the liberty of naming Pol Pot as a leader ‘who has made some errors’. One million people murdered is a glaring ‘error’. At the same time, he is sceptical about its usefulness.

7. Violence was clearly used on a large scale in the Third World during the nineteenth century. Imperialism, from 1914, and later fascism, increasingly introduced colonial customs in the metropolitan countries.

8. This usurpation (‘political expropriation’) formula is no longer, in our times, exclusive to the Trotskyists. It was applied in the official resolution passed by the nineteenth conference of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union).

9. This integration has gone through three successive stages: integration of socialist deputies into the bourgeois state; the growing merger of labour bureaucracies with upper levels of the state institutions and cooperating bourgeois institutions; initial merger of this ‘state-social-democratic complex’ with the private ‘computer-based’ sector of late capitalism.

10. I have analysed the relations between the Nomenklatura, the working class, the peasants, the ‘new middle class’ and the intelligentsia in my book Where is Gorbachev’s USSR Going? (Verso).

11. One must not confuse this rejection of all bureaucracies with an approval of reprivatisation, which would only replace the public monopolies and bureaucracies.

12. Back in the 1960s, the Hungarian critical Marxist Janosy had already stressed the contradictory tendency of capitalism to produce, at the same time, an industrial reserve army (unemployment, discrediting manual labour) and an acute shortage of highly-qualified manual labourers (especially during periods of economic expansion).


15. The SALT agreements have eliminated, up to this time, only 5 per cent of nuclear warheads.


17. That is to say, all those men and women who find themselves economically forced to sell their labour power. Evidently, another definition can be used in contradiction with the Marxist tradition and the logic of the Marxist analysis of capitalism as a whole.

18. In various countries, we can also include physicians, progressively transformed into salaried workers. Socially, this has modified their behaviour. Generally, independent physicians were, and continue to be, hostile to unions and the labour movement.

19. Immediate demands do not necessarily mean economic demands. Health-care personnel can fight for an improvement in the care given to patients, for a better recognition of the knowledge they have acquired, against the rigidity of hierarchical structures, and against bureaucratic abuse. The anti-fascist struggle – a primarily political demand – played an important role in the working class mobilisations of 1934–9.

20. On the other hand, practical experience has shown the artificial nature of this ‘division of labour’ within the labour movement. The German social-democratic government would not have been able to prevent the victory of the reactionary putsch of Kapp von Lütwitz in 1920, had it not been for a general political strike – the most successful ever – combined with the distribution of weapons to the workers.

21. See my pamphlet ‘The Leninist theory of organization'.
To provoke a creative discussion, free of taboos, it may be useful to re-examine the idea of what constitutes a socialist society, what aim we have in mind when we speak of the construction of such a society. Both the idea and the aim represent a sharp contrast between capitalist and socialist relations of production, and between the economic laws of capitalism and socialism, and need to be re-examined in the light of historical experience, complex theoretical conflicts, and new tendencies which have arisen on a world level. It is important to stress that if one rejects an identification of socialism with collective ownership of the means of production; if one realises the need for diverse forms of private, state and cooperative ownership of the means of production; if one recognises that the role of the market should not be marginal, whether or not one still adopts some method of planning, then it is difficult to define and visualise a 'socialist society' as a system which is the total antithesis of the mechanisms typical of capitalism.

The dispute about which is the road to socialism divided the European labour movement for decades, but already it is a thing of the past. The revolutionary road has for some time been indefensible. But what is still problematic today is the issue of which perspectives can be opened for socialism. It is not the contradictions of capitalist development which are in question so much as their result, and whether such contradictions can give rise to the construction of something entirely different. Furthermore, the construction of a socialist society has traditionally been conceived as something irreversible: but this is almost like saying that it is irreconcilable with full respect for the rules of the democratic game. It is not sufficient to say that the arrival of a socialist society must not be conceived in terms of a violent overthrow of the existing order, but as the result of an objective historical process, seconded by political action for the gradual transformation of the society. It is necessary to understand that the gains of a socialist type may be followed – due to the relation between the forces of the left and the conservative forces in a given country – by phases of 'restoration', suppression, or a change in the dimensions of those gains, in a process which will be far less linear and 'objective' than might appear from certain readings of Marxism.

Keeping all this in mind, it seems more defensible to define socialism as a set of goals and values inseparable from the development of democracy. Socialist goals and values must be reformulated and pursued in the context of capitalist societies and economies which have already been profoundly transformed and are undergoing further change in a world which is increasingly interdependent. In the countries of Western Europe, the
workers' movement and the parties of the left have made efforts over recent decades to translate the goals and values of socialism – based on the defence of the material interests of the working classes – into objectives for reform. This reflects a gradual change in the relations between classes and 'spontaneous' tendencies in capitalist development. It is now necessary to set new objectives for reform, for adapting and changing the general development of society. Discussion will always remain open on the validity, from a socialist perspective, of such aims, and of the results which can be obtained through social conflict and democratic politics, since there is no sacred text, no authority to which to appeal for a definitive decision. But we can draw on widely shared models to estimate the significance and scope of the programmes of the left, as well as their results and, especially, the experience of government.

The proposed definition is not an easily acceptable one. It necessitates an evaluation of the specific elements effective in bringing about social change that socialism is capable of gradually introducing into society. It has always been easy to maintain a closed identity for socialism, indefinitely postponing 'the construction of a socialist society' for some hypothetical moment in the distant future, thus evading all action that puts to the test the connection between current objectives and behaviour, and the ideals of socialism.

2

To what extent, and in what sense, compared to the past, is there a reduction in the scope for socialist strategies in national terms, and to what extent is there a change in both content and future perspectives? It can be said that at the end of the first half of the 1970s, a period of oil crisis, the forces of the left in various West European countries carried out strategies of a national character with substantial success. The improvement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of workers and the general advance of society, achieved in some countries by political and trade union action, can be considered an important achievement of the socialist movement. But since the oil crisis, there has been a strong acceleration of the phenomena of interdependence, of technological innovation, as well as internationalisation. Even so far as foreign policy is concerned, it appears that the national dimension is increasingly insufficient in relation to the past, when socialist or social democrat governments – such as the German SPD or the Swedish Social Democrats – made great contributions to international relations from a national base. The most evident example is the growing mutual relations between the economic and monetary policies of the countries of the European Community. As a result of new developments, the process of European integration sanctioned by the Single Act of 1985, common action in foreign policy by the 'twelve' has become increasingly important. It seems fair to say that those parties which represent the left have generally recognised the need to give a European dimension to their strategies for reform, for economic development, for social progress, and to place their national strategies in a wider perspective of coordination and common action on a Community-wide scale.

However, there is also an increasingly close connection between development in Western Europe and development in the rest of the world. Worldwide questions and challenges are increasingly important. The national situation of each West European country is still highly specific and continues to evolve in a different way; inside each country the interests of the working class, the principles of equality and justice, the values of liberty, of democracy, of tolerance are sustained by individual platforms, which reflect the specific realities, the historic peculiarities of each case. Nonetheless, it is a fact that there is a new joint sphere of problems and objectives common to all the countries of the EC and to all the parties of the left which operate in those countries. Also the links of competition and the need for cooperation on a European and worldwide scale are increasingly conditioning the possibilities of action and the options open at a national level. It is not easy to find a satisfactory point of equilibrium, which points to one single strategy for socialism.

Take a specific example. 'Competition' also means the effort to retain and to improve the relative position of one's own country within the EC and the creation of a single market. Can this effort – which implies policies to restructure, modernise, etc. – be accepted by forces on the left as a priority, compared with policies of social balance, the fight against unemployment, the defence or improvement of wage levels, or of the laws protecting labour? The problem of the relation between the protection of class interests and the representation of national interests exists today in a much more complex context as a result
of the effect of the continuous acceleration of the processes of integration and international competition. But from the point of view of socialism a much more difficult and acute problem is the relationship between the action of the forces of the left in the more developed capitalist countries, in the richest societies of the West, and the commitment to a new balance in worldwide economic development, and in particular, to more equitable relations between North and South. This is one of the great 'worldwide' challenges of our times, in the sense that for everyone, even for non-socialist forces, even from the point of view of the most industrialised countries, the persistent deterioration which afflicts the poorest and most populated countries may have catastrophic consequences, denying the possibility of development for the world economy as a whole. In reality, Western socialist forces should consider the commitment, which should be irreversible, to a coherent initiative in favour of a transfer of resources towards the South of the planet. Furthermore, the need to support the processes of reform and change in the economies of Eastern Europe implies a need to revise policies of the use of resources in the countries of Western Europe.

Lastly, a break from imbalance and injustice in international economic relations, and from the poverty and backwardness in so many parts of the Third World, becomes a question of survival for human civilisation. This is becoming more generally recognised with the question of stopping and reversing the process of the deterioration of the environment. They also are related issues, since uncontrolled use of resources in the more developed countries aggravates a desperate ecological situation in immense areas of the underdeveloped world. All in all, a new vision of socialism must relate class interests, national interests, and the interests of the survival of the species in a very different manner than in the recent past. The accent must be placed on the formulation and pursuit of the objectives of justice and progress on a supranational and global scale. There can be no stronger justification for the action of socialist forces than that of banishing the grave threats to human civilisation, starting with nuclear war – and of guaranteeing a much more balanced quality of development.

The crisis of systems structured and guided by communist parties in power, and the attempts at reform which have begun in the Soviet Union and other countries are not only facing grave difficulties, but causing serious and sometimes convulsive tensions. We must reject the thesis according to which the failure of so-called real socialism means the failure of the socialist ideal. Essential elements of the ideology and the practice of the biggest communist parties have led to disastrous results whether this concerns the conquest and exercise of power, the role of the state and the management of the economy, the socialist state as a monolithic society, or the function of one party as the representative of the working class. On the other hand, it was not possible, for some time, to talk of a communist movement different from the doctrines and experiences of those communist parties in power, especially since the failure of the experiment of Eurocommunism, and despite the importance of a different and original experience such as that of the Italian Communist Party.

It is not easy to see how, after 'the end of historical communism', there can be a return to either the origins of communism or to an equally imprecise neo-communism. We do not know where the processes of reform and democratisation which have begun in the East will lead, or what will be the results of changes suddenly imposed, in East Germany or Czechoslovakia, by popular pressures. We do not know, therefore, what 'reformed communism' will be. But we have already seen, starting with Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union itself, how important are Western experiences of a state of law, of representative democracy, of a market economy. The reform and evolution of the societies of 'real socialism' were placed on the agenda with great audacity by Gorbachev, in a perspective which is no longer that of the old contrast between socialism and capitalism (or imperialism), but that of the necessary cooperation and integration between the different systems of the world of today and tomorrow: an increasingly interdependent 'one world'. The old ideas of 'convergence' are out of date, because it is only the 'socialist system', in clear crisis, which seems to be verging towards a capitalist system which has recovered – in the more developed countries – from the shock of the 1970s; also because we must think of greater and more complex interrelation between different experiences (even inside the West), and of new experiments with various paths towards social and economic development.

This contribution nonetheless also needs to make a lucid critique of the reality of the more industrialised and democratic capitalist countries,
and the reality of the Third World. The 1980s saw a clear success in the West of the policies (and ideologies) which are based on the maximum use of efficiency, of innovation, of competition, even with heavy social and civil costs. This decade saw also, at the same time, a strong decline in the poorest and most indebted countries of the South, while the centralised or state-managed economies of a socialist nature lost all attraction as a consequence of the decline of their previous dynamism, and their increasing and manifest inability to guarantee the levels of social security and equality which had been central to their own image. But from all this, there arise new responsibilities for all those democratic and socialist forces which do not accept identification either with the neo-conservative logic which is prevalent in the West, or with the old schemes of the East, and which do not think it acceptable to close their eyes to the explosive reality of the South. The democratic systems of Western Europe cannot ignore the crisis of values, the inequality and marginalisation, the concentration of power, the defects of uncontrolled growth, which weigh heavily on the balance of development and prosperity as the century comes to a close. It is the task of the forces of the left to secure a reversal of the concessions and policies which prevailed in the 1980s. Only in this manner will European democracy be able to show that it still adheres to its best traditions, not separating liberty and political pluralism from new developments in the field of social justice, the management of power, or the protection of the general interest.

Socialists in Europe, at the beginning of the 1990s, are faced with starting afresh, looking beyond the borders of the Old Continent, and considering the questions posed recently by Norberto Bobbio: 'Are the democracies which govern the world’s richest countries able to resolve the problems which communism has been unable to resolve? This is the problem. Historic communism has failed. But only fools can be happy with this failure, and congratulate themselves and say: 'I told you so!' Don’t deceive yourselves: do you really think that the end of historic communism has put an end to the need and the thirst for justice? Would it not be better to take into account the fact that in our sovereign and prosperous part of the world the society of the two-thirds has nothing to fear from the one-third living in poverty, but that in the rest of the world it is the two-thirds, four-fifths or even nine-tenths of society that comprises the poor. Democracy has not come out smelling of roses from the challenge which it received from historic communism, let’s admit it. But with what means and which ideals does it intend to face the same problems which led originally to the communist challenge?'

The answer to those questions can come not only from the forces of the left in Western Europe. But undoubtedly these forces will be called upon to play a key role in the search for new peaceful and democratic avenues which will advance justice around the world. To the success of this search the future of socialism has been entrusted.
Socialism was not born in a vacuum. Nor has it arisen from the social and economic conditions resulting from the industrial revolution. Rather, socialism as an ideal of emancipation has a more far-reaching historical perspective, through which the civilised people of the world have worked to organise their societies in accordance with the principles of personal dignity, freedom and equality.

HISTORICAL PROGRESS

The history of Western civilisation is for the most part the history of a people intent on putting the democratic ideal into practice. Since the birth of this concept in Greek civilisation to the development of the principles of law in classical Rome, to the establishment of bases for democratic representation in the French Revolution and the subsequent upheavals caused by social revolutions, it can be said that there exists a common cause which has been advancing our societies within a humanistic project based on the relation of freedom to equality. This meant overcoming basic inequalities in rights (slavery versus freedom) and in power (despotic and authoritarian domination versus political participation). It first advanced the notion of personal dignity and equality before the law, then the parliamentary forms of democracy (common law states) and later social democracy (welfare states). We now are reaching the most advanced stages of social equality and democratic participation.

Beyond the specific historical events and actual socialist political projects, there are many movements which form part of this general line of progress in history, each with its own momentary breakdowns and setbacks. What can the people of our era do to contribute to this progress in history? Are the European countries at present in a position to take another giant step in the advancement of civilisation? Despite some negative pronouncements, the truth is that never before in the history of humanity has there been such a strong ethical awareness in the world, due precisely to the immediacy with which televised information reaches our homes. This ethical awareness increasingly acts as a brake and a limitation on violence and oppression.

The European countries, especially, are showing signs of a certain maturity with regard to advancing this civilised perspective. The extension of education on a scale never previously known, the spread of certain levels of social welfare and economic prosperity, the considerable possibilities for economic and scientific development opened up by the ongoing technological revolution, as well as the growing democratic and egalitarian mentality, make Europe a
José Félix Tezanos

privileged area for the deepening of democracy. Thus, it can be said to some extent that current conditions allow us to accept new challenges for historical progress and social advancement. But paradoxically, these favourable conditions, despite the fact that they coincide with an effective awareness that we are living in a period of great change and opportunity, have yet to become an innovating force in the field of political ideas. For the most part we remain anchored in debates that took place over a century ago, resolving questions that were posed in societies considerably different from those of today.

Those of us who are part of intellectual movements – like socialism – and who have the conviction that these ideas change the world, are bound to feel perplexed at the climate of ideological withdrawal which has occurred in certain political and intellectual circles over the past years, and in whose wake we still find ourselves. It is true that if we contemplate the progress of civilisation with sufficient historical perspective we must agree that ideas, arising from certain conditions, can change the world. But in the same way we must recognise also that ‘ideological’ sanctification may make of them a fetish, and enslave them. Therefore any attempt to petrify and ‘staunch the flow’ of ideas, inhibiting their free flow and expansion, ends up being an attack against history and against the possibilities of social progress. Historical experience shows, however, that all strong movements of ideas tend to become consecrated and stagnant. This tendency is often found to be in direct relation to the very strength of the original ideas (dependent on its most important demands) and also to the success they gained (at the level of hegemony and social impact). Thus it can be said that, in a certain way, the success (whether theoretical or practical is another question) of the movement of ideas runs parallel to a process of social inertia, which in turn tends to make them lifeless.

This is probably the only way to understand the accelerating crisis Marxism has experienced in recent years. It is a result both of the erosion caused by the passing of time and more than a few ‘hard contrasts with the facts’. For the most part, beyond the practical failures, many intellectuals and politicians have experienced this crisis as a clear awareness of the limitations of the ideology that – in some form or another – the majority of European leftists have believed in for so many years. The peculiar thing about this ideological crisis is that it has not occurred as a consequence of the emergence of a more operative alternative model; it has not been a logical result of an exterior defeat or of an empirically demonstrated improvement over the model, as we could have been led to expect from the concepts of scientific revolutionary theorists like Thomas Kuhn. Rather, for the most part, it has been the result of an awareness of the inadequacies of both theoretical and practical experience. The primary consequence of this crisis, as far as it exists, is that it leaves – or could leave – an appreciable political vacuum and that it causes – or could cause – a significant gap in the theoretical defences of socialism in the future (more important than the possible irreversibility of various historical conquests). In this manner, an ideological vacuum tends to be substituted at times by short-sighted and commonplace pragmatisms, or even worse – by a bastardised and mediocre exaltation of the established historical order: neo-conservatism.

Nevertheless, we would be wrong to underestimate the grave risks for the future of socialism, and for the possibilities of advancing the progress of human history in the long term. Recently, some neo-conservative theorists have developed a line of argument which, though weak, is able to convince some of those people who live comfortably in the prosperous societies of the Western world. The message transmitted to these citizens is intended to be a message of security, based on the memory of the uprisings and conflicts of the period between the wars, and the harmful, and sometimes aberrant, consequences of fascism, Stalinism, and other revolutions which left violence and human grief in their wake. By creating a negative echo which stirs the memory of these events and of the experiences of ‘real socialism’, the neo-conservatives’ argument ‘warns’ against the risks and uncertainties of ‘daring’ social and economic experiments. In this way, democratic capitalism is presented as the ‘most reasonable’ social model or even as the ‘least bad’ form known in the history of humanity; the model – they say – that has avoided the ‘big mistakes’, that has ‘guaranteed’ greater levels of freedom and political stability, and has permitted the highest level of collective prosperity ever known. For this reason the neo-conservative theorists demand the uncompromising maintenance of a social system which – they say – ‘has had good objective results’. Therefore, it only seems necessary to ‘redesign’ small details.

In reality, this line of argument – which elicits a certain response in time of great social and technological change – is attempting to ‘conse-
and risks involved in taking innovative action for the future. The oversimplified arguments of Fukuyama have attempted to lay the foundations for an alleged end of history, interpreting the current crisis in communist countries as a 'knock-out' victory for 'liberalism'. This will thus become consecrated as the 'perfect political and economic order', without an alternative ideology or an organised system capable of presenting alternatives. In this way, some prophets of the end of history lock themselves into a provincial perspective which confuses the end of contrasting ideas with the crisis of their Cold War opponents. They confuse the end of the Cold War in practice with the disappearance of any variety in the way in which different social systems are organised.

From a more general perspective, such picturesque ways of presenting the question of the end of history may influence some people in countries which have already reached a certain level of material prosperity and social welfare. Their negative effect is a dampening of the ability – and the enthusiasm – to support the development of policies for innovation and change. This cooling in political and ideological interest is reinforced by a growing awareness of the political and economic failure of the countries of 'real socialism', and by signs of ideological exhaustion exhibited by the traditional approaches of social democracy. However, what this approach ignores are the possibilities that the communist countries' capacity for self-reform, and the social democratic parties' capacity to bring about successfully their renovation and ideological revitalisation, will end up operating as significant counter-devices for these negative and sterilising tendencies, based precisely on their ability to introduce a more realistic framework, which is more open to the possibilities of the future.

The move towards a meaningful reform of traditional communism among the European social democratic parties – together with their formulation of specific social policies – are factors that, in the medium term, will work in favour of gaining a more attractive public image for socialist options in general, thus increasing its ability to operate as an alternative ideology to that of liberal capitalism. In reality, if it were not for the extraordinary publicity it has gained, the neo-conservatives' pretensions to proclaim the end of history should be considered as a barely plausible hypothesis which hardly deserves to be refuted. Real historical experience shows how enormously difficult it is to contain and control the dynamic possibilities of change implicit in all human organisation; although there have been cases in the past where it has been possible to slow them down considerably.

Socialism, like all socially transforming initiatives, has contributed effectively to the progress of forms of social organisation. With an overall perspective of developing and deepening democracy, through the recognition of social fissures, contradictions and the unfulfilled possibilities existing in society, it has brought about the introduction of social, political and economic organisational methods based on freedom, equality, justice, solidarity, harmonious development, etc. In this sense, the neo-conservative attempt to staunch the flow of historical progress is profoundly wrong. This is irrespective of how long a model for a particular political system is able to exist and be successful in certain countries (including taking into account the cost of marginalising significant social and national sectors). From an overall viewpoint, it seems evident that the risks of social readjustment have not come to an end. We are a long way from resolving the problem of deficiencies and ignorance suffered by the better part of the planet's inhabitants, nor have we been able to consolidate a civilisation free of personal and collective risks. Many battles remain to be won in all the corners of the world: battles to overcome the conditions of misery, ignorance and personal unhappiness in which millions of human beings live, to achieve a greater personal and collective quality of life, to reach open, participative and stable political systems, and above all to guarantee an adequate ecological and environmental balance.

Thus, the tasks of socialism are in large part unfinished. They can only be successfully undertaken after adequately renovating and updating the theoretical ideas and political policies. Consequently, we can say that the need for theoretical reflection is now just as important as it was at the beginning of socialism when, like all intellectual movements, it arose out of intense and lively debate, and at a time in the history of humanity when faith in the possibilities of reason and human progress was at its peak. It is in this sense that we can say that socialism inherited the spirit of the Enlightenment, and that the spirit of freedom gave rise to the spirit of socialism.

The history of socialism has been punctuated by periods of deep reflection and theoretical
debate, not only because socialism is embedded in a strong intellectual tradition, which in itself has provided an ideological motivation, but also because its historical reality has been based on the adjustment of the theory – of its main principles – to the concrete reality of each country and each particular period. The works of Bernstein, Kautsky, Luxemburg, Lenin, the Fabians, etc., are a result of the debates which took place in certain countries during these particular moments, and are a result of the effort to apply the general principles of socialism to the practical reality. In the same way we can say that the theoretical debate, the effort to construct a theory that served as a guide for political action, has played a very significant role in socialist activities. In recent years, nevertheless, the impact of critical revision on all areas of socialist political thought – which left intellectuals have actively participated in – has been impressive.

The evaluations and ideas expressed in the literature available to us today on the socialist theorists of the past, present a tremendously critical panorama: the forebears of socialism are described as being somewhat utopian and pre-scientific; the libertarians are considered naïve; Marx would be credited with a long list of mistakes; Kautsky, as we know, was called a 'renegade', Bernstein a 'traitor' and an 'opportunist'; Lenin has been criticised for his dictatorial inflection; Rosa Luxemburg is said to have been a slave to social illusion, and Trotsky was dogmatic. 'Real socialism' is defined, at best, as a sad parody of true socialism, while the social democratic experience of the postwar period has been subjected to all kinds of criticisms and discredit. Yet socialism is still alive in the hopes and consciousness of millions of human beings, and is evident in the results of practical work which has undoubtedly made notable historical advances.

It is certainly the case, then, that when we take stock of our legacy, the socialists of our time do not arrive by any means empty-handed. Over the last century historic socialism is written onto some of the most important pages in the development and progress of humanity, and has contributed with its efforts to the correction of many perverse and degrading lines of social evolution. But after more than a century of effort, and from the perspective of today, when we rigorously and honestly review what is still valid and useful among the theoretical baggage inherited from socialism, one cannot help but feel a strong sensation of lack and insufficiency. After all the important changes that have occurred during recent decades, and all the processes of adaptation and adjustment that arose from the Second World War, the technological revolution now underway is altering many of the beliefs and concepts of socialism in such a way as to underline the need to develop new approaches to socialist theory which can successfully fill the gaps left in the theoretical structure formulated by the classical masters of socialist thought over a century ago by the criticisms of left intellectuals.

Our current shortcomings and inadequacies require us to reformulate:

- An alternative to existing models of highly imperfect societies (socialism as ideology);
- A concept of the subject – or subjects – capable of promoting socialism (socialism as a social movement);
- The relevant actions for promoting socialist progress (strategies).

To use a metaphor, this means, in short, the rewriting (and updating) of the script, of thinking of new performers, and of acting in accordance with new dramatic methods and techniques. Actually, the who, what, and how of socialism are not separable elements, but rather form part of the same entity. It was their divorce and separation which led to errors and mistakes in the past. However, for analysing these core aspects it is necessary to employ a method of segmentation.

WHAT SOCIALISM? RETHINKING SOCIALISM

The changes in economic, social and political circumstances affect socialism both as a social movement and as a 'body of ideas and hopes'. The socialism of the twenty-first century can no longer be understood or explained in the same way as the socialism of the end of the nineteenth century. This is not only because of the impact of social changes, but also, significantly, because the level and type of aspirations, needs, demands and possibilities are not the same in technologically advanced societies as in those societies that were undergoing the transition from traditional agriculture to capitalist industrialism. Over time it is not only the nature and character of inequality and needs that have been modified. Collective hopes and aims have changed, due in part to the upsurge of new problems, and in part to the appearance of new opportunities and demands brought into existence by past successes. All this implies a more demanding and wide-ranging conception of
Socialism, less tied to the specific conditions of the societies which gave birth to the grand theories of socialism in the past. This also applies to the objectives of socialism. Besides which, socialism must be understood, in the broadest and most open way possible, as one of the fundamental elements of human progress and social dynamism. It is in this sense that we can define socialism as a liberating ideal of a progressive extension and deepening of freedom and equality. Socialism aims to change those social relations and organisations which result in inequality, unmet needs and social domination. It aims to set up new forms of social organisation in which the practical possibilities for social life can be extended, based on the full development of human potentialities, on creativity, innovation, brotherhood and cooperation. That is what human progress is about.

However, the problem consists not only of how we can understand or define socialism, but how we can affect the manner in which we think about socialism. In the first place, the socialism of the future cannot be understood as the mere process of travelling cautiously along a meandering path with no goal or precise objective, with an unknown destination. But neither can we think of socialism as a crystallised and concrete model detailing all the facets of an alternative society. In truth, if we make a simplistic reduction of the metaphors that were used historically to explain the two main methods for achieving socialism, we find ourselves dealing with the substratum of a certain elemental process frequently found in infantile dreams. Because of this, it is not difficult to make either a Freudian interpretation of the social democratic ideal of socialism as a misty path to be trodden cautiously, or an interpretation of the Leninist concept of socialism as the act of conquering a castle - a type of fairytale castle in the clouds which sometimes ends up turning itself into a nightmarish castle full of dungeons. But the socialism needed today can neither be explained in terms of infantile dreams nor as a fairytale. Neither the idea of misty paths nor castles in the clouds can now serve as illustrative references for socialism in the coming decades.

The model of future socialism, as far as being a reference model is concerned, must be a guide for action. But to qualify the earlier metaphor, it cannot aspire to provide a finished script ahead of time, with rigid, detailed stage instructions supposedly valid for all time and every situation. The model of socialism that we need must provide an open base of reference and be dialectically adjustable. It cannot be a lexicon of a priori 'ideas', but it must give specific social reference for practical 'confrontation' of inequality, domination, dependency and alienation. Socialism hopes to channel tension into emancipation. The conquest of the 'enchanted castle' is nothing other than childish daydreaming.

Secondly, another important change for socialist thought is the need to admit fully the complexity of reality. If the historical development of social organisation points to a clear tendency of the simple evolving into the complex, then the truth now is that this tendency is undergoing an extraordinary acceleration and accentuation as a result of the technological revolution. One has only to look back a little to compare the diversity, heterogeneity and complexity of the societies of our day with the agricultural societies of just a century ago, or with the first forms of industrial organisation. Thus, it is unreal and naive to think of socialism in terms of simplistic solutions for societies as a whole; still less for the societies of the future. In this sense, socialist theories have to traverse the path travelled by modern science and abandon any pretence of being able to think in terms of a single, grand theory, a macro-synthesis of knowledge, a search for uni-causal explanations, or of only one route to a single destination, with one, and only one, reference model.

The challenge faced by the new perspectives – once they are firmly installed in the complex reality – is how to integrate the possible with what is real. In other words, how can we give a clear meaning to the complex social elements which are the basis for initiating the changes which will advance socialism. A socialist project for the future which does not resort to self-deception is destined to lose in simplicity and clarity what it will gain in reality and veracity. It will also be necessary to draw up a socialist plan of action that can be communicated in such a way as to give clear and intelligible messages, both sociologically and politically. Undoubtedly, the problem is not easily solved, especially at a time of intense social and technological change. There is little to be gained from simply referring to the explanatory models used by modern science in order to uncover the principal lines of contradiction and domination that may aid the process of emancipation in this complex world.

The accompanying diagram represents the principles of both contradiction and domination elements in a very provisional form, and gives no more than the beginnings of a provisional
**DIAGRAM OF THE CONTRADICTION-DOMINATION NETWORK IN INDUSTRIALISED SOCIETIES**

(Possible social bases for the motivating agents of future socialism)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>INFRACLASSES</th>
<th>SOCIAL-SECTORIAL</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Civic-Political Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of domination/contradiction</td>
<td>Class domination/economic exploitation</td>
<td>Alienation as political estrangement</td>
<td>Marginalisation of opportunities and of standard social means</td>
<td>Social estrangement as segregation from labour market with infrapolition of power and devaluation of standard of living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject of the domination</strong></td>
<td>Working classes (in their entirety)</td>
<td>Unions and professional and interest associations (like formal groups) (bureaucracies) citizens without power</td>
<td>Socially subordinated and dependent women</td>
<td>The youngest and the oldest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes (roots of the domination)</td>
<td>Traditional capitalist relationships of ownership and appropriation of surplus</td>
<td>Lack or insufficiency of objective and subjective spheres of contradiction and of social and political power-sharing</td>
<td>Insufficient development of assessional and compensating policies due to collecting limitations (transition in taxes and availability of wealth)</td>
<td>Cultural or institutional subordination and economic, labour, legal and political dependences, etc. (patriarch, authoritarian hierarchy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals of emancipation (participation)</td>
<td>Formula for sharing in the ownership (or in the holding/management/self-regulation) and in the profits (individual salary increases or overall improvement in the quality of life)</td>
<td>Increase in participation (via coincidence of internal political parties/必然会 or instrumentalisation, or overall social agreements with unlawful holders of power Institutionalisation of contradiction channels. (Social Economic Council, etc.)</td>
<td>Assure social minimums Operationally develop welfare state policies</td>
<td>Assure equalities of sexes in education, labour, institutional and political opportunities, etc. Antidiscriminatory cultural changes Greater participation and micro and macro sociological co-responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central theme</td>
<td>More equality</td>
<td>More participation</td>
<td>More social symmetry (equality)</td>
<td>More solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal institutional competitive groups</td>
<td>Political working class parties versus established economic powers</td>
<td>Unions and partial, collective, sectorial, consumer, business interest groups, etc. versus representatives elected by popular will Unions and consumers versus established economic powers</td>
<td>Shortage and/or unassisted groups versus groups that now participate (or exert more pressure in the 'cutting of the cake')</td>
<td>'Autonomous' feminist groups versus 'political' feminist groups versus discriminatory-segregating forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Social and political effects</td>
<td>Social theory: Sociopolitical theory of overall social system dependency (far reaching historical perspective)</td>
<td>ideological analysis models sectoralisation → N.M.S. of the dominated-alienated</td>
<td>more freedom more equality more participation more solidarity more social and environmental balance</td>
<td>more freedom more equality more participation more solidarity more social and environmental balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Worldwide</td>
<td>Political theory: Political strategy to bring together sectoral interests in line with the deepening of democracy</td>
<td>ideological analysis models sectoralisation → N.M.S. of the dominated-alienated</td>
<td>more freedom more equality more participation more solidarity more social and environmental balance</td>
<td>more freedom more equality more participation more solidarity more social and environmental balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>Social movements Extensive socialist party and pluralistic in</td>
<td>ideological analysis models sectoralisation → N.M.S. of the dominated-alienated</td>
<td>more freedom more equality more participation more solidarity more social and environmental balance</td>
<td>more freedom more equality more participation more solidarity more social and environmental balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The diagram includes various social classes, their goals, and the contradictions they face, along with suggested social policies and cultural changes to address these issues.*
analysis. It leaves out the fundamental question of determining the power lines of social 'dramatisation and symbolisation', from which it would be possible to identify and aggregate individual interests. Only then would it be feasible to identify the respective social forces and thus compensate for the centrifugal tendencies and the mutual neutralisation of social pressures. Perhaps one should begin by asking which groups may, in the future, be interested in supporting a political project which would initiate socialist ideals in a practical way. This leads us – in view of everything discussed so far – to the central question of identifying the actors for the new script.

WHICH ACTORS?

For some time changes in the class structure have given rise to uncertainty and theoretical imprecision, reminiscent of the famous works of Pirandello, in which the characters (the plural working class) wandered from place to place in search of an author. The difference today is that it is as if the author, faced with the difficulty of finding convincing characters, has decided to do without them altogether. Is a future socialist project possible without specific social characters? Can socialism be understood as an autonomous idea which goes beyond the social network of given societies? Can the characters of socialism in the twenty-first century be the same as those imagined by the great theorists of the nineteenth century? This is an essential question which we cannot simply ignore either in theory or in practice.

The transformation of the economy has evidently modified both the nature of inequality and the composition of the social groups which, objectively and subjectively, are the most interested in overcoming the new forms of inequality and social asymmetry existing today. This does not mean that the traditional classes, which are now better integrated into society, have altered their social allegiance. But the fact is that the complexity of the system of inequality (the greater internal stratification within the working class, the emergence of dual inequality systems, the appearance of 'infra-classes', of new marginalised sectors, etc.) gives rise to an increase in the contradictions and potential divergence of interests between the older, more integrated, social groups and those new groups that suffer most from the shortages and shortcomings of the social imbalance of transforming societies. The simplistic traditional image of socialism, as class confrontation between different and clearly identified subjects, must be replaced by a far more flexible image, and above all by a clear understanding that the reaction to conflictual situations is going to depend on a greater diversification of the variables and on more complex cross-alignments. In today's societies we are already witnessing secondary conflicts of interest which significantly influence the social and political conflicts which we consider to be of principal strategic value. My diagram, in this sense, may seem clear. But it is not difficult to anticipate that various conflicts of interest between groups occupying different social positions could, in due course, give rise to a very different outcome.

Logically a socialist approach should lead us to search for ways of reconciling, rather than confronting, the new individual or group interests, many of which have yet to overcome the old forms of dependency and alienation. But present experience demonstrates a tendency towards an increase of potential contradictions, especially in societies that are the most complex and heterogeneous. Certainly, we are far removed from Marx's conception of the traditional working class becoming the social majority. There are now sufficient objective conditions for socialism to reject the idea of a single revolutionary subject. Thus we have reason to question the lack of real consistency in the theory of a single revolutionary subject which many socialists and communists have believed in for many years. Despite the writings of Marx on specific class analyses and his economic approach to it, we can now see that it was nothing more than a political recourse. It was based neither on the empirical data nor on the logic of the economy, which was understood by Marx in a much more complex way.

The theoretical weakness of the concept of a revolutionary subject – and its sociological frailty in practice – ended in some cases by postulating an additional 'super-force' (the idea of a 'proletarian dictatorship', militarisation and bureaucratisation of the 'vanguard party', etc.). None of this would have been necessary if, in practice, the working class had become as strong and as homogenous a force in social, economic and political terms as the theory had assumed. The solution was a forced response, which too often led to aberrations. Many of the revolutions carried out in the name of socialism (in Russia, China, etc.) were made precisely in agricultural, rather than industrial, countries and relied very little on industrial workers. The fact that the
José Félix Tezanos

relative weight of the working class in the population tended to diminish, rather than increase, gave rise to new approaches in social democratic parties. Some of these parties ended by diluting their plans with more sociologically extensive and inclusive concepts, such as, for example, the 'inter-class party', which eventually converted the weakness of the socialist theory of the revolutionary subject into the socialist theory of the weak or 'washed-out' subject.

Overall, it is paradoxical that one of the most important divisions among the left in recent years, which reinforced the historical division of the socialist movement into various factions (the idea of the 'vanguard party', the dictatorship of the proletariat, the mass party, etc.), stemmed from the need to find practical solutions to problems which themselves arose from wrong thinking about social classes in the first place. This paradox sheds light on the manner in which major political organisations can spend years arguing over fallacies. Today there is a new evasive approach to this question. Not unlike the resort to a 'weak subject' interpretation, this now resorts to the concept of socialism without a subject at all, understanding socialism as a mere moral or rational initiative that does not require a specific social incarnation. By operating in this manner, such a debate on socialism removes itself from the political field in order to situate itself in the field of ideas and philosophy. Such an ideal aspires to 'interpret the world', but cannot motivate the force to change it.

Yet what characterises socialism is precisely its capacity to combine both the initiative of ideas and social mobilisation. Their mutual dynamic is crucial. Without it the ideas themselves would become sterile. It is for this reason that the real foundation and starting point for both socialist theory and practice is to give priority to the data on social reality. From both current and future perspectives it is crucial to be aware not only that there is a new technological revolution, but also that its effects add extraordinarily important complex elements to the existing reality. As Adam Schaff has shown, this technological revolution is dissolving the social class on which socialism had based its hopes for emancipation. With the automation of the labour process the basic force which was long regarded as the central social motor of change, is itself changing. Without dramatising the scenario (or situating the analytical approach within too short a perspective) the technological revolution implies two very important role changes vis-a-vis the question of the actors in the script of socialism which we are considering.

The introduction of robotics in the work process tends towards a reduction of human labour, and of the time allotted for productive work. This means a reduction of the hours of work in the sphere of commodity production (and also in the rendering of certain services), and also a growing reduction in the number of traditional blue-collar jobs, and a change in the nature of blue-collar labour. Secondly, it implies the elimination of one of the principal historical sources of alienation, exploitation and domination in the production of socially necessary goods and services. As the industrial robots replace labour, they also displace part of the alienation implicit in earlier employment relations, whether they were slave, serf, or wage labour. This does not mean that robotics per se lead to social justice or a greater symmetry in the social relations of production. But what it does imply is that thousands of millions of hours of exploitation and domination are going to be eliminated, with all that this entails in the practical elimination of part of the basic contradictions inherent in the wealth-generating process of production systems. But this also implies the reduction of an important factor for overcoming capitalism - the direct action of labour.

The enormous complexity of the new perspectives generated by the technological revolution will undoubtedly provoke an ongoing debate of the first importance. The agenda for such a debate must also address a range of new issues. For instance, it is becoming clear that there is no single motivating force for socialism, neither unrest, dependency, alienation, exploitation, nor poverty. Rather, there is a range of causes which reflect the different facets and dimensions within which specific social change occurs both at work and in society as a whole, resulting from the way in which societies organise production and trade. In turn this means that the socialism of the future must abandon the 'labour-centred' and 'economic' approaches of the past and base itself instead on social concepts which are much more global and comprehensive.

In addition both the acceleration of change and the ideological inertia and obsessions of the past have divorced past theory from present reality. This gap is reflected on the one hand by the wide-ranging debate on the left concerning the future. But it also affects the attitudes of capitalism, whose ideologies consistently invoke the past. The lack of adequate answers to short-term problems
– whether in social areas or the environment – illustrate the state of the divorce between theory and reality, and the ensuing risks of tension and disfunction, not least in the area of economic theory. Further, increased social complexity, and the heterogeneous nature of the source of social inequality and conflict, which act as the motivating elements of socialism, oblige us to think not in terms of a single social actor in the context of socialism, but rather in terms of several actors and players, including both new and traditional groups which can jointly agree on some central objectives of emancipation and social progress. The bringing together of these interests must constitute one of the main objectives of theory and practice.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Accelerated change, and the clear evidence of ‘unexplored territory’ within socialism, which inhibits the discovery of solutions for the challenge of the future, necessitate urgent changes not only in how socialism is defined, but also in the way we understand and perceive the problems that must be resolved. First, socialism must not be perceived as a social or political phenomenon limited to classical industrial society and its specific conditions and inherent cycles. Socialist ideals, and the hopes and aspirations that motivate them, date from before the development of industrial societies, and their future will outlive one or another distinct form of social organisation.

Secondly, from a historical perspective both the theory and practice must be understood and evaluated as a positive stage in the process of deepening and spreading democracy.

Thirdly, the current theoretical crisis of socialism shows that some specific formulas and policies have reached their practical limits. The theoretical debate on socialism needs much wider perspectives in order to break away from stereotyped ideas and to shift the focus from questions which were posed in societies quite different from our own. Theoretical gaps represent not only an internal paradigm crisis, but also new opportunities to develop new terms of reference and new possibilities for the revitalisation of the socialist project.

Fourthly, the link between the socialism of the past and the socialism of the future needs to guarantee that socialism continues to carry out its basic role as the motivating force in social progress, extending freedom, promoting equality and defending environmental policies. Socialism, therefore, must be capable of giving plausible responses to specific needs and real problems. It is true that ‘ideas move the world’, but it is no less true that they move it only when based on specific initiatives which can generate social support. The role of socialism is to generate and stimulate social (and environmental) policies, to develop moral and rational initiatives, and to articulate a sufficient social force to mobilise positive solutions to shortages, needs, conflicts and the contradictions which exist in all societies.

Fifthly, the crisis of particular aspects of the traditional socialist model affects not only some of its policies, but also the way in which they were based on the cultural and social conditions of a specific historical period. For the future, the reform of the model must be founded on new terms of reference which reflect the way socialism is defined and understood, as well as the way in which it is perceived. In order to plan for socialism in the future we must begin by making an effort to create a different awareness of both past and present.

In sixth place, socialism must be understood as a process which motivates social progress and which operates on the basis of a value structure which confronts those social relations which produce inequalities and alienations. In a certain way, therefore, socialism can be defined as being against all that is inhuman. The rejection of deprivation and exploitation, in this sense, provides the ideal that motivates change and social progress.

The socialism of the future therefore must be based on ideals. It should not be subject to the risk either of hyper-pragmatism, or of dogma. Nor can it be divorced from its social base. It must avoid abstract speculation, and be based on social reality. Thus, the key to a socialism of the future lies in focusing all its efforts on ensuring that it continues to fulfil a social role, without becoming obsessed with the hows, and even the whys, of ‘historic’ socialism. It is evident that some historical formulas were simplistic. They had very little to do with the reality of the societies in their own time, and even less with ours given its present, and increasing, complexity.

The simplistic formulas of the past still exercise too much constraint on socialist thought today. The main erroneous formulas were the assumption of ‘social unrest’ arising from alienation at work, and – as a corollary – the theory of the single revolutionary subject; the concept of the proletariat as a universal social class, eternally
suffering universal hardship, is not the key to universal freedom. This analysis is based on a reductionist and simplistic view of social reality, viewing all social relations through productive relations. We are not dealing with a purely academic or scientific question of whether past simplification was genuine, or whether it responded to reality. The key question for theory is whether it explains social reality and can initiate change. Without a doubt, the best response, sociologically and politically, to these reductionist formulations is to forget them.

In the complex societies in which we live there are many possible forms and causes of unrest, inequality and alienation, and diverse aspects of change. Not all of these are economic or social. This implies the existence of several factors with the potential to motivate change. Consequently, it is difficult to think that one, and only one, supposedly comprehensive theory of social unrest can encompass that complex social reality. To do so would be no better than returning to the 'magic' approach of the 'proto-sciences' which, before the development of modern science, were primarily aimed at gaining acceptance by resorting to simple and elemental explanations.

The social initiatives for socialism in the future may stem from social unrest and the imbalance of resources. But the relevant social forces must work through consensus among the key players. Marginalised groups which represent new social demands – including the 'underclass' – must be added to the traditional teams. Social dynamics indicate that in future societies (as in many societies at present) none of these groups by themselves have sufficient social and political potential to shape and mobilise real change. All these specific groups must start to work together.

One of the key tasks of socialist theoretical work in the coming years is going to be the study of the different and complex interests and issues, both positive and negative, which motivate collective behaviour under complex conditions. As we gain a better knowledge of such social interactions, the specialists will have to respond to a triple challenge. First, to provide both subjective and objective explanations of the main power lines in social dynamics: this means identifying basic elements of social conflict and unrest as both symbolised and dramatised by individuals through social behaviour (including moral attitudes as well as physical conditions). Second, to demonstrate our ability to translate these explanations – and alternatives – into a clear, understandable and practical political message. Third, to design general strategies based on heterogeneities and differences within the existing society.

In summary, the 'new way of thinking' about socialism will need to travel a path similar to that travelled long ago by modern science, while avoiding the illusion of totality. Thus, we need to change:

- from a uni-dimensional theory to a multi-dimensional theoretical approach;
- from the pretension of a grand, global and universal theory to a group of intermediate-range theories based on the nature of domination, on ecological balance, on the 'underclass', on the democratisation of work, etc., in such a way as to fill theoretical gaps and map out 'unexplored territories' for specific theoretical advance;
- from the concept of socialism in one country to a plurality of socialist internationalism;
- from the theory of the single revolutionary subject to the plurality of socialist actors;
- from closed and absolutist conceptions about socialism to more open and plural approaches.

Such changes will make it easier – and more feasible – to work together politically and to adopt joint action than it would be if we maintained monolithic ideological positions. Experience has shown us that dogmatism and closed ideologies have promoted divisions and confrontations among socialists. In the complex developed societies joint action is only possible from a dynamic and diverse base. Only in this way will socialism work effectively and be able to continue to motivate social progress from the long-term historical perspective of a deepening and spreading democracy.
WHAT COMES AFTER
COMMUNIST REGIMES?*
Ralph Miliband

1

The overthrow of the communist dictatorships in Eastern and Central Europe in the second half of 1989 was the product of upsurges which were among the most spontaneous and popular revolutions to have occurred this century; and one of their most remarkable features was their mainly peaceful character. Once Soviet protection had been withdrawn from these regimes, their own police and military apparatus was soon paralysed in the face of sustained mass demonstrations. The speed with which events moved, once the process had begun, shows well enough how extreme had become the failure of ruling parties and governments to maintain any significant measure of popular support.

As in the case of any revolution, however, these upheavals raised the question of what was to replace the regimes that had been overthrown. In fact, two distinct questions needed to be answered: the first was what kind of political regime was to be set up; the second concerned the nature of the social order that was to come into being. The same two distinct questions have also been posed by the crises which have gripped all communist regimes apart from those in Eastern and Central Europe, most notably the Soviet Union.

There are many revolutions in the world which bring about a change of political regime, but which do not seriously affect the social order, or which do not affect it at all: the democratic successes in recent years in Latin and Central America are cases in point. There too, dictatorships have been swept away by popular upheavals. But the economic, military and administrative power blocs which had sustained the dictatorships, and which had been sustained by them, remained in place, with only some changes in personnel in the government and the state. The new political regimes, for all their extreme shortcomings, are a distinct advance on the ones they have replaced; but for the vast majority, the social order has remained as alien and oppressive as it had previously been.

In the case of communist regimes, on the other hand, economic, political, military and administrative power had been so merged in the party-state that the break-up of the political regime was bound to bring into immediate question the issue of the social order itself; and this meant in particular the question of what was to happen to economies that were based on the public ownership of the predominant part (at least) of the means of economic activity.

In one case at least, that of the German Demo-
critic Republic, an answer to the questions posed by the demise of its communist regime has already been finally settled by the country's complete absorption into the Federal Republic, its integration into the Federal Republic's capitalist economy, with the intended privatisation of most of the state-owned firms in the defunct GDR. It may take quite a while to dispose of the great bulk of these firms, but it will no doubt be done, and the process will be helped by the closing down of many of these firms.

In other communist or ex-communist countries, the position is rather more complicated, but the dominant tendency is clearly towards the creation of economies in which most of the means of industrial, financial and commercial activity would be privatised and come under indigenous or foreign (or joint) ownership and control. This tendency is strongly encouraged by Western governments, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, reactionary foundations, and also private capitalist institutions; and it is further strengthened by an array of pro-capitalist advisers, who have taken full advantage of the failures of communist regimes to press on the successor regimes economic policies derived from the law of the jungle.

What is at issue here is nothing less than the complete undoing of the social revolutions which occurred in these countries after the Second World War. That such social revolutions did occur may be obscured by the fact that most of them, in Eastern and Central Europe, were imposed from above, indeed from outside, and that the regimes issued from them turned out as they did; but this does not negate the immense, revolutionary changes, good or bad, which they all experienced. The authoritarian or semi-authoritarian political structures which had been in place in most of these countries in the prewar years were dissolved; and so too were the social hierarchies which, save in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, had kept the great majority of their (mainly peasant) populations in a state of dire subjection. In all of them, property relations were profoundly transformed; in place of the traditional ruling classes, members of hitherto excluded, marginalised or persecuted layers of society gained access to positions of power; state structures were thoroughly reorganised; modernisation in every area of life was the order of the day; a rhetoric of socialist commitment and proletarian democracy was given pride of place; and great changes were made (or were at least proposed) in the whole national culture.

For a short couple of years after 1945, and before the imposition of the communist monopoly of power, there was hope, nurtured in the terrible years of war, that there might be built a democratic and egalitarian order on the ruins of the old and discredited prewar regimes; and there was even a very broad measure of popular support for the changes that were occurring. Whether there really ever was a possibility that a reasonably democratic and egalitarian order might be built is a matter of controversy. But if it did exist, it was quickly snuffed out by the onset of the Cold War and the imposition in all the countries of the Soviet sphere of influence of the Stalinist model of political rule and economic organisation, with the communist monopoly of power and the stifling of all dissent, and the imposition of the command economy over all aspects of economic life.

Even so, there were two sides to these regimes, particularly in their earlier years: on the one hand, they were viciously repressive and cruel; on the other, their record, in terms of economic growth, modernisation, education, welfare, and new opportunities for a majority of hitherto greatly disadvantaged people, was far from negative, especially if account is taken of the lamentable conditions that most of them had inherited. Nor is it accurate to think of all the leaders of the communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe as mere scoundrels and stooges. Many of them had in fact spent many years in the anti-fascist struggle in their country, and had suffered grievous persecution for it. Their tragedy and that of their successors was that the system they built or accepted was based on unchecked power, and demonstrated to perfection how deeply corrupting such power is, and how wasteful and ultimately inefficient is economic management under its auspices.

Communist regimes did try a variety of economic reforms over the years, with the purpose of reducing the rigidities of the command economy. But the system of power, and the bureaucratic apparatus that went with it, remained in being and defeated all attempts at remedying an increasingly severe crisis. The reform programme in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Prague Spring, might have provided the basis for a more successful renewal; its abrupt ending by Soviet military intervention meant that the crisis in all communist regimes under Soviet control would not be seriously tackled. One of the merits of Mikhail Gorbachev was to have perceived early after his accession to power that a radical change in the political system in democratic directions was an
essential though not a sufficient condition for economic renewal. Unfortunately, as he himself admitted in a speech to the Congress of Soviet Deputies in December 1990, the reforms he did engineer lacked coherence and consistency.

The upheavals of recent years have destroyed the power structure spawned by Stalinism. Conservative forces in the Soviet Union remain strongly entrenched in various parts of the administrative, military, economic and political system. An authoritarian outcome of present difficulties in one or the other of the republics which make up the Soviet Union cannot be excluded; but a restoration of the iron dictatorship from the centre which once had the whole country in its grip now seems rather unlikely. In Eastern Europe, some people who occupied leading positions in the old regime have remained in positions of power in the new ones. But they have only been able to do so by repudiating the past, and remain highly vulnerable. In short, the revolutions of 1989 (and perestroika in the Soviet Union) have created a space for new political, economic and social structures. The question is how that space is going to be filled.

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In Eastern and Central Europe, the regimes which have replaced the communist ones have declared their intention to adopt one variant or another of Western-style democracy. In formal constitutional and political terms, this may be taken to mean a regime based on stipulated civic and political rights, political competition, mandatory elections for parliamentary assemblies and local authorities, accountable executives, judiciaries free from executive dictation, and redress against arbitrary state action. Such a regime, in societies with a strong tradition of rights, and with well-entrenched and independent civil institutions (Gramsci's 'earthworks' and 'trenches') undoubtedly makes possible the voicing of opinions, grievances and demands, and the fostering of a public opinion to which governments and representatives, removable by way of general elections, must pay some heed.

These features of Western-type regimes stand in sharp contrast to the modes of rule which have been characteristic of communist regimes; and the contrast has obviously been greatly in favour of the former. The installation in ex-communist countries of such political regimes, however great their shortcomings may be, marks a real advance. On the other hand, the term 'democracy', which is always used to describe Western-type regimes, carries a strong ideological and propagandistic charge, and begs many crucial questions about their nature and functioning. For it leaves out of account the fact that Western-style political democracy operates in the context of a capitalist social order, and that this imposes severe, even crippling limitations upon the meaning of democracy.

An essential requirement of democracy is that there should exist a general equality of condition between citizens, so that no group of people in society should have a built-in, permanent and vastly preponderant measure of power and influence in decision-making. But such inequality is precisely what obtains in capitalist-democratic regimes. The degree of inequality of income, wealth, influence and power between citizens varies from one country to another, but it is nowhere negligible, and it is certainly very pronounced in such countries as the United States, Britain and France, which never cease to congratulate themselves on their democratic character, and in most other capitalist-democratic countries as well.

The capitalist context in which the state functions means that the control of immense resources is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of people, who are thereby possessed of great power. Defenders of 'free enterprise' tend to speak of it as if it consisted of a vast scatter of small and medium firms, all fiercely competing with each other, and none of them with much influence and power beyond the confines of their own narrow domain. In reality, contemporary capitalism is on the contrary dominated by great conglomerates and transnational firms, and the people who control them are able to make decisions which are of the greatest importance not only to the firms themselves, but also to their city, region, country, and, in many cases, to people and economies far beyond their own borders. A crucial feature of these decisions is that the people most affected by them have little or no control over them. Western-style democracy does not generally cross the threshold of the corporate boardroom. Nor does it have much access anywhere in the corporate economy.

Apologists for capitalism also argue that the decisions taken in the boardroom are inherently congruent with the public good and the general interest, because of the operation of that famous invisible hand guided by the market. But the claim is belied by the whole experience of capital-
ism. For wherever it has been allowed to proceed unchecked, capitalist enterprise has always proved to be a menace to those who work for it, and to society at large. This is to be expected, since its dynamic is the pursuit of private profit, with any other consideration a mere distraction from that pursuit, and therefore quite naturally ranking far behind it. This is why powerholders in the state, however dedicated they might be to 'free enterprise' and the market, have always found it imperative, for the sake of the system itself, to curb the anti-social propensities which form an intrinsic part of its nature. The trouble, however, is that the state, save in a few exceptional countries, notably Sweden, where counter-capitalist forces have been strong, has been greatly (and willingly) constrained in its curbing endeavours, and only seeks to attenuate, at best, the depredations and derelictions of 'free enterprise'.

All this forms the necessary background to the arrangements which are now being proposed for the countries that once formed part of the 'Soviet bloc', and which are already quite advanced in such countries as Poland and Hungary. The magic word everywhere is privatisation. But privatisation has implications which are seldom made clear by its devotees. One of them is that the transfer of public property to private agents means the creation of a new capitalist class, whose purposes would be no different from those of their counterparts in capitalist countries. The provenance of the members of this new class is still somewhat uncertain, since its formation is still in its early stages. But a good many of them, as is already happening in Poland and Hungary, would come, ironically enough, from the discredited Nomenklatura, for these are the people who know their way around, have the right connections, and have money or can obtain credits and loans. Others would be people who had acquired wealth in the second or black economy; and there would no doubt emerge a host of budding entrepreneurs eager to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the sale at bargain prices of plants, equipment, land and other resources hitherto in the public domain. Any comparison with the New Economic Policy inaugurated by Lenin in the Soviet Union in 1921 is misleading: for NEP never brought into question the public ownership and control of the main means of economic activity. What is envisaged now is precisely the privatisation of these (and other) such means; and the process would of course involve the acquisition by foreign firms of many enterprises, particularly the most efficient and profitable ones. Local managers, as in Latin America, would then become the representatives and employees of faraway owners and controllers even more remote from national needs and concerns. The prospect of such a foreign takeover is openly – indeed eagerly – contemplated by many of the people who were in the forefront of the movements which brought down the communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe.

However it would be composed, it is quite certain that it would be a new capitalist class. It would be different in kind from the 'new class' that was constituted by the 'state bourgeoisie' of communist regimes, for it would be based on ownership and control of private enterprises rather than on the control of public ones. Such control, operating in the context of dictatorial regimes, itself had many oppressive and arbitrary features; but it is pure prejudice to suggest that this is the only context in which it can conceivably operate, and that it is therefore bound to be oppressive and arbitrary.

The new capitalist class, like capitalist classes everywhere, will seek the greatest possible freedom from the tiresome constraints which the state in capitalist societies has been driven to impose upon private enterprise. In respect of labour relations, wages, hours and conditions of work, health and safety, consumer protection, environmental concerns, not to speak of such issues as the establishment of democratic procedures at the workplace, the new capitalists could be expected to be strongly opposed to any interference with managerial prerogatives, and to denounce such interference as an intolerable harking back to the bad old days, and as a sign that 'communist' influences had not been finally rooted out.

No doubt, these entrepreneurs would not have it all their own way. There would be resistance from many quarters, particularly from workers. Workers in communist regimes have always been told by their leaders of their worth, rights and power. The reality was for the most part very different from the rhetoric. But the message that workers do have rights and should have power will not have been forgotten. Having been freed from the managerial power of their communist managers, and from retribution at the hands of the state for speaking out, they are not likely to accept without resistance the imposition of arbitrary power upon them by their new indigenous and foreign bosses.

Most of the new regimes are already members of the International Monetary Fund and the
World Bank, or have applied to join; and most of their leaders are, to all appearances, perfectly willing to accept the philosophy which membership implies. In essence, what is involved is the acceptance of drastic cuts in public expenditure, privatisation and deregulation, tax concessions to national and international business, and whatever else capitalist rationality, as interpreted by bankers, entrepreneurs and conservative economists, is deemed to require. That rationality, on the other hand, does not include the notion of full employment and the right to work. Nor does it include the notion that the state has a prime responsibility for the provision of a high level of social and collective services in health, education, transport, the environment, amenities, etc. What is wanted instead is the greatest possible 'recommodation' of life and the enthronement of the cash nexus as the essential mechanism of social relations. There are now many voices everywhere in Eastern and Central Europe, and in the Soviet Union, to proclaim that high unemployment, rising prices, reduced social services, and all other ills that accompany the rule of the market are part of the price that must be paid - mainly by those least able to afford it - to achieve a 'healthy economy', a term which is itself laden with ideological and question-begging assumptions. Poland is one country which has already experienced the full effects of the 'shock therapy' advocated by market fanatics and implemented since the beginning of 1990. The results have been catastrophic for the vast majority of the population, with a fall of some 30 per cent in industrial production, a massive rise of unemployment, a drastic fall in purchasing power, and a considerable spread of dire poverty. Such 'shock therapy' has had other consequences of which its advocates seldom take account - a vast increase in crime and prostitution, quick fortunes on the one side and multiplication of beggars on the other, and general demoralisation and cynicism. On the strength of what has already happened in countries in Latin America where a similar 'shock therapy' has also been administered, there is no reason to believe that this 'primitive capitalism' is capable of curing the ills which it has produced.

A capitalist restoration in ex-communist countries will be based on a partnership between the new capitalist class and the controllers of the state. As in the case of all capitalist countries, the partnership will not be free of divergent purposes, tensions and conflicts. Capitalists have interests which may conflict with those of powerholders in the state; but there is sufficient congruity of purpose between them, including a dedication to the market economy, to ensure an adequate degree of accord.

This new power bloc will be concerned to do what all such power blocs seek to achieve, namely maintain, defend and strengthen the system which gives them their property, position, privileges and power. Such a purpose, in class societies, has large implications for the workings of the political system.

As already noted, the new capitalists and the new powerholders in the state will encounter a good deal of popular resistance to their endeavours. Such resistance has already occurred in many ex-communist countries in the form of sporadic strikes and other manifestations of popular discontent; and this must be expected to grow as the negative consequences of the rule of the market come to be increasingly felt. Also, elections which have been held in these countries since the revolutions of 1989 clearly indicate that while their populations repudiate the former regimes, they do not repudiate the social benefits which these regimes proclaimed to be the due of all citizens, and which, however inadequately and imperfectly, they sought to provide in such realms as health, education, housing, transport, the right to work, etc. The enthusiasm which the new rulers display for the market economy is not shared by masses of people who rightly fear what it will mean for them. This indeed is one of the main problems which these new rulers face; and they speak with great feeling, at least in private, of how difficult it is to instil in the working class a new psychology, which would make it accept the notion that a 'healthy economy' imperatively requires a great increase in inequality and the unfettered rule of the market.

Governments faced with popular resistance to their policies, and strongly pressed at the same time by powerful internal and external forces to pursue these policies, tend to find that the democratic forms which define capitalist democracy are exceedingly inconvenient; and they are therefore driven by a compelling political logic to reduce the effectiveness of these democratic forms. One common way of doing this is greatly to increase the power of the executive to the detriment of legislative and other sources of protest and resistance. Another is to curb trade union rights, for instance by limiting the right to strike, and to
curb civic and political rights in general. Yet another is to increase the power of the police and the military to control and curb pressure from below against unpopular policies; and even though it is no longer possible to describe protest and opposition as Soviet-inspired, there is still much life in the denunciation and the repression of protesters as ‘communists’, agitators and agents of dark forces bent on sabotaging national renewal. All capitalist-democratic regimes, for all their proclaimed dedication to pluralism, political competition and freedom of expression, constantly seek to contain, deflect, subdue, and ultimately suppress inconvenient forms of dissent; and they all have a vast arsenal of emergency powers, which is readily drawn upon in times of crisis. In other words, the authoritarian side of these regimes, which is usually circumscribed (though not absent) in ‘normal’ times, comes to the fore in conditions of stress, strife and turmoil, when the regular functioning of the political system can no longer ensure stability.

Given all the ills which a capitalist restoration in ex-communist regimes is certain to produce, circumstances would undoubtedly favour a creeping authoritarianism within the framework of constitutionalism, with a steady erosion and perversion of democratic forms, in the name of the national interest, national salvation, and indeed democracy. The state in these regimes would be very weak in relation to international capitalism, and would preside over dependent economies; but this need not prevent it from being quite strong vis-a-vis its own citizens. Latin America offers many examples of such a combination of weakness and dependency abroad and oppressive power at home.

The tendency towards creeping authoritarianism is bound to be strengthened by the ethnic and national tensions which the demise of communist regimes has again brought to the surface, often in virulent forms. Communist regimes obviously failed to resolve these tensions, and only managed to suppress their overt expression. The extent of their failure in this respect is clearly shown by the eruption of murderous ethnic strife in different parts of the Soviet Union, where generation after generation of Soviet citizens were drilled into giving a superior allegiance to the Soviet Union as a whole, but where conditions on the ground were such as to keep alive, though hidden, ancient grievances and antagonisms, which immediately surfaced once the repressive apparatus was loosened. Much the same goes for Eastern and Central Europe, where the new regimes have come into a bitter inheritance of national, ethnic, religious and racial enmities and prejudices, among which antisemitism occupies a choice place.

Regimes in which the market is the organising principle of life, with competition and individual striving for material advantage acclaimed as the highest virtues, cannot tackle any of these problems effectively. Nor can they generate the social morality which communist regimes, because of the contradiction between their socialist rhetoric and their actual practice, were themselves unable to foster. Even rich capitalist countries, ruled by the same organising principle, have been unable to tackle effectively the economic and social ills which the system produces: why should poor countries, faced with a plague of problems of every sort, be expected to do better under the rule of the market?

The more reasonable expectation is that they will not and that this will provide a very fertile terrain for the further growth of movements based on a nationalism that readily slides into an exclusive, aggressive, xenophobic chauvinism, with other (or the same) movements drawing on the most backward and reactionary interpretations of religion. The influence of the Vatican in this respect should not be overlooked; for the present Pope does have a project – to ‘re-Christianise’ ex-communist countries, and for that matter the rest of Europe, and beyond, in directions which point very firmly towards an obscurantist past in which Rome was the unquestioned legislator of the true faith.

Times of crisis, with the political system under great strain, also offer a favourable terrain for the emergence of self-proclaimed saviours, spouting a populist rhetoric of national redemption, and fierce in their denunciations of a variety of suitable scapegoats. They would no doubt declare themselves to be ardent democrats; but they would nevertheless be bent on reproducing the kind of ‘strong’ regimes which were characteristic of most of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe in the interwar years.

The revolutions of 1989 were largely fought in the name of freedom and democracy; and enormous efforts have been made by a multitude of official and unofficial sources in the West to persuade ex-communist countries that the essential, indispensable condition of freedom and democracy is free enterprise and the market, in other words capitalism. In fact, a capitalist restoration is much more likely to produce conditions where free enterprise does indeed flourish, but
where freedom and democracy would be severely curtailed or even abrogated altogether.

One of the main arguments used by advocates of wholesale privatisation and the rule of the market is that there is no alternative; or rather, that the only alternative is totally regimented economies. But this either/or categorisation should be treated for what it really is, namely prejudice and propaganda masquerading as objective judgement. For the issue is not whether a market should exist: it is rather what place it should occupy in economic and social life, and what degree of regulation it requires. Even the most committed of free marketeers admit that some matters cannot be left to the market and the workings of free enterprise, and that the state has to intervene in some areas if civilised life is to be maintained. Indeed, the same people turn heavily ‘statist’ when it comes to such issues as ‘law and order’, defence and the curbing of trade union and other rights, and are not in such respects in the least reluctant to see the state’s power greatly increased.

The difference between them and their ‘interventionist’ opponents is that the latter insist on the state’s responsibility for the organisation of a wide range of collective services whose provision should not be governed by the rule of the market – health, education, public transport, the protection of the environment, the provision of amenities, the access to quick and cheap justice, and much else that defines the quality of life and the reality of citizenship for the vast majority of people. The point is not that the state itself run all such services; but it should ensure that provision, by whatever agencies, should be made for them.

As for productive activity, the point has already been made that a degree of regulation and control has always been imperatively required, given the a-social and anti-social dynamic of capitalist enterprise; and capitalist entrepreneurs, for all their proclaimed dislike of the state, have always been the most voracious consumers of state help by way of protection and subsidy, against the dictates of the market. So too is it well to remember that countries which have in recent years been most admired as examples of free enterprise – for instance South Korea and Taiwan, not to speak of Japan – would be better cited as examples of state intervention in economic life. In short, state interventionism has always been an intrinsic and crucial part of the history of capitalism: the point is to create the conditions in which that interventionism is placed at the service of society.

It is by now generally agreed on the left that the state cannot possibly plan every detail of economic activity, or at least that it cannot do so in ways which are satisfactory. But this is very different from saying that a democratic state, mandated by popular will freely expressed after due debate and deliberation, should not determine economic and social priorities, and plan for their fulfilment. It is a perverse dogmatism which stipulates that all planning is by definition undesirable: controllers of the state, whatever their ideological dispositions may be, do plan for some years ahead in such areas as highway construction, the building of schools, hospitals, prisons, the procurement of weapons, etc., and they seek to ensure that the plans are fulfilled. The point is to extend this a great deal further, without any thought of controlling from the centre every aspect of economic activity.

Similarly in relation to private versus public enterprise, the issue is not at all whether there should exist a private sector or not, but what is to be the nature of the ‘mix’ in ‘mixed economies’. The term was invented as a euphemism for capitalism, and served to obscure the fact that in reality it denoted an overwhelmingly predominant private sector, with a subsidiary public sector largely confined to infrastructural concerns; and the drive to privatisation in the last decade in many capitalist countries has further reduced and weakened the public sector. The alternative to both the command economy and the ‘market economy’ (another and more recent euphemism for capitalism) is a ‘mixed economy’ in which the position of the public vis-a-vis the private sector is reversed, and where the commanding heights of the economy, including its strategic industrial, financial and commercial enterprises, and some of the lesser heights as well, come under one form or another of public or social ownership, under the scrutiny and regulation of a democratic state, itself strictly accountable.

State ownership is only one form of social ownership, suitable for some major industries and services, but to be complemented wherever possible by local and regional enterprises and partnerships, owned and run by municipal or regional authorities, and by various organisations and collectivities in society. All such bodies would enjoy a very considerable autonomy; and they would, in many instances, be competing with a
private sector, located at the lower heights of the economy or at its grassroots, and providing a wide range of goods, services and amenities. This is the kind of economic pluralism which is truly congruent with political pluralism, all the more so because state ownership need not be thought of in terms of single, monopolistic corporations, but rather as areas of economic activity ruled wherever possible on the principle that more-than-one is better than one.

A fundamental tenet of the apostles of the free market economy is that a different economy, in which the public sector was predominant, is bound to be inefficient. The notion of 'efficiency', like so much else in the vocabulary of such people, is heavy with ideological overtones; but even if taken on its own terms, the assertion must be treated as mere dogma. Even in communist regimes, public ownership was not always inefficient; and communist experience of public ownership cannot in any case be taken as proving anything, given the exceedingly unfavourable conditions under which it operated. Also, the experience of public ownership in capitalist countries shows that it can, to put it no higher, be as efficient, innovative and 'entrepreneurial' as capitalist-run concerns.

There are, however, reasons other than 'efficiency' for wanting a mixed economy with a predominant public sector. One crucial such reason is that public ownership removes from private hands the control of assets and resources which, as was noted earlier, are of essential importance to society. Private armies in control of stocks of weapons are now thought to be an abomination, which no properly run society could ever tolerate. However much it may offend conventional wisdom, and even much current thinking on the left, it needs to be said that the private control of what are social assets and resources is scarcely less abominable. They too need to be subject to a degree of control, regulation and direction which private ownership and control makes difficult, ineffective, or impossible. The power concentrated in the hands of the owners and controllers of large corporations – the great oligarchs of industry, finance, commerce and communications – can only be effectively 'socialised' by the transfer of the sources of their power into the public domain.

Among the objections which are raised against any such transfer is that it entails the danger of an inflation of state power. Against this, it is worth recalling that the free market economy has itself not only been perfectly compatible with a dictatorial state, but also that it profoundly corrupts and degrades the democratic forms of capitalist-democratic regimes. But the answer, more positively, is that an economy in which the public sector is dominant need not be tightly run from the centre; that it is intended, as noted earlier, to be marked by economic pluralism; that the state itself would be democratically constrained; and that it would function in a democratic context.

A predominant public sector is an essential condition for the creation of societies in which cooperation and fellowship are the dominant values; but nobody would now argue that it is a sufficient condition. The experience of communist regimes is proof enough of that. A predominant public sector is no more than the indispensable 'base' on which new social relations may be built, in a process that is certain to be long and difficult. But it is a process that opens up possibilities of human emancipation which are precluded by the spirit and the practice of capitalism.

It is that 'base' which devotees of the free market economy, inside and outside communist and ex-communist regimes, seek to destroy by their frantic pressure for privatisation. They are finding that the wholesale disposal of national assets to private buyers is likely to be a difficult and protracted business. Nevertheless, the privatisation campaign will no doubt succeed in some countries, say Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, not to speak of the former German Democratic Republic, and will in due course produce an economy in which the private sector will be heavily predominant. Other ex-communist countries, notably the Soviet Union, are still at a point where crucial choices in this respect have not yet been finally made. In the Soviet Union (and elsewhere) a struggle is still proceeding in a situation of great ideological confusion, but whose protagonists may be ranged, no doubt with many qualifications, into three sets of positions. First, there are the free marketeers, bent on wholesale privatisation and the free market economy, that is, capitalist restoration, who enjoy the support of the West, and who are freely dubbed reformers, radicals, democrats, even though there are many such people in their ranks whose democratic credentials are exceedingly dubious. At the other end of the spectrum, secondly, there are those people who hanker for the good old days, when the Nomenklatura ruled, the command economy was in place, and there was no nonsense about democracy, perestroika and glasnost. These are the 'conservatives', whose num-
bers and strength are not easy to evaluate, since they are for the most part careful not to parade their opinions too openly. Somewhere in between these two positions, there are the protagonists of a 'third way', who do want political pluralism but who are not willing to see the larger part of the economy, particularly its strategic heights, fall into the private domain and form the basis of a capitalist restoration. Such people are often assimilated to the 'conservatives', and reproved or denounced, because of their opposition to such a restoration. In fact, they are the best hope – in all probability the slender hope – that what will follow communist regimes may be something approximating to the beginnings of socialist democracy.

So far, socialists in the West have done very little to give encouragement to such people in their search for a 'third way': the field has been virtually left to the right, with its glowing prospectus of the virtues of the free market economy. An urgent task for people on the left is to explain why the prospectus is fraudulent, and to help in the advancement of socialist alternatives to it.
THE BEGINNING OF HISTORY
Manuel Castells

POINT OF DEPARTURE?

Human history is not coming to an end, but only just beginning at the present time, if the history of a specific biological species is understood to mean the possibility for this species to express that which distinguishes it from other species – in this case its capacity to create mental universes capable of translation into material forms. For thousands of years men and women have known a daily struggle for survival. To survive against the harshness of hostile nature, very far removed in its concrete reality from the idyllic image sketched by contemporary ideologists from the comfort of their industrialised societies. To survive the devastating epidemics and hunger that ravaged Europe until the eighteenth century. To survive the arbitrary and suffocating oppression of absolute monarchies and all-powerful aristocracies approaching senility, and oppressive to such a degree that human rights are perhaps the scarcest goods to have been enjoyed by our species in the course of its long march through terror. And above all to survive war, that regular scythe of lives and plans which for millennia and up to only a few years ago, has been the atrocious experience of almost every generation. An experience which – lived, remembered, or anticipated – was always the keynote of human existence, both individual and collective. Like spring and winter, at a certain moment in people’s lives war came, and then peace, but a peace always threatened, always suspended by the thread of military strategy, and betrayed by the artifices of the ambitious. Hunger, disease, torture, prison and war, actual or threatened, have formed with varying intensity the essential fabric of human life until today.

What we are experiencing at present is perhaps one of the few historical periods to which the term ‘revolution’ can be applied in the true sense of the word. Because at the present time, in Europe and in other areas of what is known as the North, within a geopolitical sphere of hope with uncertain frontiers, we appear to be seeing the elimination of great material privations, the arrival of political freedom and human rights, and above all peace as both a lived experience and a horizon, for the great majority of the population and thus for society as a whole. In the most fundamental sense the current process is, or may be – we pray that it is – our emergence from the tunnel of prehistory in which nature (in other words brute force) dominated humanity, in which the apparatus of power (arbitrary armed might) shackled society, and in which war (organised destruction) tortured the bodies and tormented the minds of human beings. We are coming out into the light of History, with the possibility of controlling and choosing the direction of our own evolution as societies, naturally not without the
contradictions and conflicts affecting any human organisation, but within the framework of coexistence, reason, cooperation and consensus. Obviously injustice, repression and, to a certain extent, violence, continue and will continue. But in a fundamental part of our planet there is coming into being a social, economic, political and moral order which is establishing the bases for a human civilisation also humane in the strict sense of the term, that is to say built around values which are shared and defended by the immense majority and in which social living-together, political legitimacy and economic progress are taken as the defining elements of social organisation. In this sense, we have left the realm of Necessity (though not that of multiple necessities) and we are entering the realm of Liberty (though the defence of liberties is always necessary). It is in the full exercising of this freedom that the human race can begin to live its own history, and instead of wasting its experience create the conditions needed for humanity to become human to the full extent of its biological and cultural identity.

Why here and now?

THE GREAT CHANGE

If for the moment we leave aside some areas of the planet (to which I shall naturally return in my analysis in order to integrate them in a global vision), and if we centre ourselves in the geopolitical heart of the process of historical transformation, that is, Europe, the great change is due to the convergence of three major and interrelated processes which, in coming together, have brought about the end of the confrontation between the great military blocs, that is, the revolution in information technology, the integration of the world economy and the political integration of Western Europe, together with the end of communism as a system. Although the three processes are well known, it is important to recapitulate their characteristics in order to analyse their relationships and interpret the meaning of their historical simultaneity.

The technological revolution which came to fruition during the decade of the 1980s out of the great innovations of the 1970s (the micro-processor in 1971, the recombination of DNA in 1973, the personal computer in 1975) represented a qualitative jump in our productive and management capacities, determining the scientific advance in the generation, processing and transmission of information, that is, the central process of human activity. In the present technological revolution information plays the part of paper, which provided the driving force of the two industrial revolutions. And, like energy, information is characterised by its interstitial effects in the interplay of human activity, and for this reason it constitutes a technological revolution which affects the whole system and not only the production process and the world of work, although this is where it finds its primary scope for evolution. The fact that the core of the technological revolution is centred in information directly links, for the first time in history, the scientific and cultural capacity of societies with the development of productive forces, provided that this link is effectively made through a social, institutional and commercial organisation which channels symbolic processing capacity towards computerised production processes. To the extent that programmed machinery takes over the actual execution of productive tasks, it is programming capacity, and therefore the capacity for structured symbolic invention, which determines the control of economic productivity and technological and military strength, sources of wealth and power. The technological capacity freed as a result is such that, if societies were able to overcome the obstacles inherent in their organisation, the material basis of abundance for all exists. In Western Europe, notoriously, hunger has given way to the structural overproduction of agricultural products, and in the United States 3 per cent of the working population produces sufficient agricultural products to feed the whole country, and also to export 50 per cent of its production. In addition, the introduction of bio-engineering and computerised methods into agriculture are only just beginning. In the same way in the 1990s we are seeing the generalised advance of computerisation and telecommunications into the service sectors, enabling the enormous reserves of potential productivity in these sectors to be released, the holding back of which has hitherto constituted a real obstacle to the overall growth of our economies. This is why it is necessary to ensure that technological modernisation and the expansion of world markets proceed simultaneously, so that the extraordinary growth on the supply side is balanced by a parallel growth in demand.

Similarly and decisively, in the 1980s, also for the first time in history, a global economy was established functioning on a daily basis in real time. This is not a process of internationalisation of the economy, but of its globalisation.
torsions have long since demonstrated that capitalism was from its beginnings an articulated system with a worldwide dimension, and the internationalisation of the economy was a process which accelerated considerably with the 1950s. Nonetheless, what is really new is that the economies considered as a whole (and especially the economies of the OECD area) have interpenetrated so deeply that they form a sole economic reality, a global economy in which capital, labour, goods, services, technology and information interrelate on a daily basis irrespective of frontiers, making national economies finally obsolete as units of management and structurisation of productive activity. In this sense, what is important is not so much trade as the motor of world economic activity, the worldwide nature of economic activity as such, both for the big multinationals (the main agents of the new economic system), and for the small and medium-sized firms linked together in subcontracting and sales networks operating within an international frame of reference. In the final analysis this is true also for the states themselves, which can already no longer work within the limits of national economic policies, but must have economic policies related to a global frame of reference on the basis of socio-political interests which may themselves be defined within a national context. It must not be forgotten that the establishment of this global economic system and, in general, of a global system interwoven in all its aspects, has only been made possible by the recent technological revolution and by the development of telecommunication information systems, as well as by a worldwide system of audio-visual communication links.

Economic and technological interpenetration within a cohesive world system favours, objectively speaking, the preponderance of big groupings, in terms of size of market, scientific and technological resources, and the political weight of the governmental authorities involved. The United States, as a consequence of its own historical constitution, enjoyed a large comparative share in the new system. Japan was able to create a critical mass adequate for the first phase of development of the new model, thanks to a great effort to extend its domestic market and increase its indigenous technological capacity, although probably its vulnerability in terms of native resources will impose an expansionist strategy on it in the future. Europe had to react as a historical collectivity to resist the integration in a subordinate role of its separate countries, if they had remained isolated entities, in a new world structure around the Pacific axis. French nationalism and the German need to remain open towards Eastern Europe (in a vision the rightness of which has been demonstrated by recent history) will establish, paradoxically, the conditions for an acceleration of European unity as a response to the increasing economic, technological and strategic satellisation of the separate European countries in relation to the American-Japanese axis. The Single Act, the 1993 horizon, and the acceleration of the construction of a political Europe have, within a few years, seen the creation of the biggest market in the world, a significant concentration of scientific and technological resources, and a collective capacity for political intervention in the process of reconstructing the world order. In a fundamental sense Europe, despite national differences, has proved able to meet the historical challenge of the economic and technological transformations of the last decade.

Nevertheless, the historical event which marks not simply a change of period but a change of epoch, has been the end of communism as a historical reality and a representative utopia of the values of the prehistory of humanity. On the other hand, the sudden nature, the extreme rapidity, and the tone of historical inevitability which characterised the dismantlement and, in a way, the suicide of the communist system were profoundly related to the economic and technological structural transformations to which I have referred. There is no other way of explaining the collapse of a system which for decades resisted all social pressures and all the desires for freedom of the individuals and peoples subject to the Soviet state, as demonstrated by the repressive measures which buried revolts as big as those of Berlin in 1953, Poznań in 1956, Hungary in 1956, Prague in 1968, or Poland in 1970. The social movements and struggles for democracy in the countries of Eastern Europe were not the cause but the consequence of the transformations initiated from the summit of the system, but although thus permitted and even stimulated, these democratisation movements are greatly overflowing the channels originally laid out for them, having grown in strength and speed to take directions not foreseen in the process of change envisaged by the former Soviet leadership.

It is not self-evident that the Communist parties, or their natural heirs, will disappear entirely in the former Soviet Union, or in Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, nor especially in other contexts, such as China, Vietnam or Cuba where the Com-
communist Party was a decisive component in what at a given moment in their histories was a movement of national liberation, but we are nonetheless witnessing the formation of new societies and new political systems in Eastern Europe. What has disappeared in Eastern Europe, and in the former Soviet Union (and what will probably disappear in the rest of the world) is the communist system as such, and as I have analysed it elsewhere. That is to say, a system characterised by the domination by the party of the state and of the state over the society via the twin mechanism of a centrally planned state-controlled economy and the imposition of the ideological dogma of Marxism-Leninism. This system has already been overthrown by the process of historical change, but not yet buried, in that the death-throes of the former subject societies are producing tremendous convulsions with incalculable consequences. In any event, by mid-1990 it was already possible to talk of a democratic situation within all the limits of a transition process, throughout Eastern Europe, with the exception of Albania and perhaps Yugoslavia and Romania. It was also possible to talk in terms of an apparently irreversible march within what was then the Soviet Union towards a market economy, towards political democracy and towards decolonisation, with the inevitable result of an institutional redefinition of the Soviet state and its dismemberment into a series of sovereign republics whose future convolutions would be uncertain.

Why, how, and why at this particular time, has this great historical change taken place, culminating in the end of communism? The answer to this question is fundamental in that on it depends what we may consider as the reversibility or irreversibility, over the long term, of the current process. My analysis is therefore based on the proposition that it is necessary to relate the revolution within the system to the initially reformist project of perestroika, and the latter to the economic and technological transformations which constituted a new historical paradigm in the decade of the 1980s. Gorbachev and the reformist group of the Soviet Communist Party, enmeshed in the problems of the Kruschev era, came to power after various post-Brezhnev attempts to maintain immobility, with the aim of overcoming a fundamental paradox: how was it that 70 years after the revolution, the largest country in the world, with immense resources and an educated and hardworking population, was living in conditions increasingly inferior to those in the industrialised nations of the West, to such an extent that it was the only country in which infantile mortality increased over the last decade. At the same time, the Soviet Union was incapable of assimilating the information technology revolution as a result of its backwardness in microelectronics, information and telecommunication engineering, and because of the concentration of its scientific and industrial resources on the military industrial complex, the black hole absorbing everything. From this arose the absurdity of a society which spent at least 15 per cent of GDP and 25 per cent of its total budget on military expenditure, and in which whole sectors of the economy were under military control (electronics, telecommunications, the aircraft industry, shipbuilding, transport, a major part of the chemicals industry, etc.), notwithstanding which the Soviet military machine was rapidly made adolescent, left behind in the technological arms race initiated by the United States in 1983 with the Star Wars programme, because it failed to assimilate the information technologies available in decentralised form, linked to a military strategy of a more flexible and agile nature. That is to say, in terms of both material wealth and military power, the communist system had come up against its own limits and was becoming aware from within these limits of its historical failure. The economic studies of Aganbegyan showed how the Soviet GDP growth rate decreased continuously from 1971 onwards to become stagnant precisely in 1985, as the basis for growth passed from quantitative factors (capital plus labour) to qualitative factors (technology, commercial management, flexibility and efficiency in the allocation of resources). In fact, the first reforms of Gorbachev (in agricultural technology, showing the unbelievable failure of Soviet agriculture) were aimed at the machine tools industry, with the hope that bringing new technologies into this industry would also have an effect throughout the whole fabric of Soviet production. But the result of this technocratic process of technological modernisation was the same as in other countries and other systems: increasing the technological capacity of an inefficient management increases, rather than diminishes, the level of inefficiency. This is why Gorbachev, from 1987 on, understood that there was no possibility of technological and organisational modernisation without economic reform. But he also understood, and this is proof of his extraordinary vision, that the necessary economic resources would not be available without a reduction in military expenditure (necessitating disarmament and therefore real détente),
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and that he would not be able to count on the political resources required to deal with the contradictions within the reform process without a democratic and liberalising movement towards openness. In this sense, perestroika, glasnost, disarmament and the conclusive proof of this search for peace, that is, the decolonisation of Eastern Europe, were necessary and linked elements in a single strategy which Gorbachev implemented in a pragmatic and more or less uncontrolled form. With political and ideological openness however, there came the explosion of repressed nationalism going far beyond perestroika and leaving Gorbachev in the position of having to negotiate his own line of conduct in the wake of events within the Soviet Union. The result was the acceleration of the dismantling of the communist system and the renunciation by the Soviet Union of the exercise of its role as superpower in military terms.

The conjunction of the technological revolution; the integration of economies in a global system; European unity; the maintenance of cooperation systems between the seven big Western powers; the end of communism and the democratisation of Eastern Europe; together with the pacifism in concrete terms of the Soviet Union, led to the end of the Cold War (with the demolition of the Berlin Wall the new history begins on 9 November 1989), and later the end of military bloc confrontation and even to the paradoxical idea of a future association between the Soviet Union and NATO. This situation permitted an acceleration of the disarmament process, a stabilisation of world peace, and a reallocation of the enormous resources buried in systems of destruction intended never to be used, towards productive and social uses. A lasting peace without tension, within a horizon without time limits, was the fundamental material out of which our new history, that is to say true human history, can be made.

THE NEW HISTORICAL SEGREGATION OF HUMAN SOCIETIES: THE FOURTH WORLD

The perspectives opened by the transformations listed above are greatly darkened as soon as we consider the selective and unequal nature of these transformations in different areas of the world and within societies. In particular, it would be cruel to pretend that the fight against hunger and disease has been won when 1000 children die each day on this planet. And when war continues to slaughter hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands of human beings in practically all latitudes. And when torture is a daily practice of the majority of governments existing today, and when political freedom and human rights are still an unsatisfied desire for many people. The democratic and industrialised societies must remain clearly aware of the fact that they constitute an island of peace, freedom and prosperity (however relative these terms may be) within the perilous sea in which a major part of humanity suffers.

Nonetheless, this fundamental and necessary reminder must not obscure recognition of the start of a new history, although it is essential to locate this process of transformation within the global context of misery and oppression. Furthermore, the contradiction between the collective creativity of the new history and the concrete negativity of the situation of most human societies may generate processes of destruction which will greatly impede and may even prevail over the transforming impulse of the new age. In order to understand and evaluate the strength of these potentially destructive processes it is necessary to diagnose accurately which of the societies within the new history are marginal, and what are the causes of this marginalisation.20

In fact, it is not certain, contrary to the popular image in public opinion, that the Third World considered as a whole will see its situation worsen nor that the lag in the dynamic speed of development will in general widen between the South and the North.21 What is certain is that Africa and Latin America saw their economic growth become stagnant in the 1980s (and in some cases, such as Peru, the GDP fell spectacularly), while Asia taken as a whole has experienced an average growth rate of 6 per cent per annum over recent years.22 Asia contains 67 per cent of the world population. This growth has not been limited to the spectacular case of the 'Four Tigers of the Pacific', whose trajectory over the past 25 years or so has shown that economic take-off is possible in the new world system from an initially backward and dependent position, but also extends to other countries. China, for example, during the 1980s showed a growth rate of between 8 and 10 per cent, Thailand 11 per cent, Malaysia and the Philippines 6 and 7 per cent respectively, while India and Indonesia have shown proof of significant economic vitality with a growth rate of between 4 and 5 per cent during the late 1980s. In South and Latin America, the dynamism of the Chilean economy, the reinivigoration and
streamlining of the Mexican economy, the exporting capacity of companies in the industrialised south of Brazil, together with the stabilisation of the Bolivian economy after the hyper-inflation of 1985, show that the burden of debt is not an inescapable doom making a country impotent to develop.\textsuperscript{23} The out-of-date fatalistic and simplistic view according to which the Third World is a helpless victim of a North uniformly bent on exploiting its resources, is empirically false and ideologically biased when formulated in these general terms. More serious however is the way in which this simplification and generalisation of the problem prevents a sufficiently clear analysis of the grave crisis which our planet as a whole is experiencing and, as a consequence, obscures the ways in which this crisis can be overcome.

The fundamental process which the so-called Third World is undergoing is its disintegration as a relatively homogeneous entity.\textsuperscript{24} South Korea or Singapore are closer to Europe in terms of economic and social development than to the Philippines or Indonesia. Even more important however is the fact that São Paulo is socially further removed from Recife than from Madrid. Not only this but within the city of São Paulo itself, the Avenida Paulista and the working-class city of Osasco belong to different socio-economic constellations. Not only in terms of social inequality but in terms of differences in dynamic and social factors, the Third World has ceased to exist. On the one hand countries, regions and cities differ in their course of development and in their integration, subject to great contradictions in a new, highly dynamic model of world development. On the other hand, there is a progressive abandonment of segments of economies and societies, of countries, regions and social groups, which cease to have any economic and functional interest for the system as a whole, because they are too poor to constitute markets and too backward to have value as a labour force in a productive system based on information, in which raw materials are rapidly losing in relative value. What I have elsewhere called the ‘new dependency’,\textsuperscript{25} fundamentally linked to cumulative technological backwardness, leads to a segmentation of societies and to a disjointed incorporation of such segments in the global network of interdependence. All societies are affected by this process, but the big differences lie in the proportion of the population integrated in the new dynamic model and in the role played by each element within the system in this process of integration. Considered in this light, the beginning of history is taking place under conditions of segregation for a large part of the population of the planet, but not in the dangerously simplified terms of North versus South, rather in a more complex and insidious form characterised by the fact that social, cultural and regional groups, and in some cases entire countries, become irrelevant as a result of the economic dynamism and functional logic of the system, and then constitute social problems (and also problems of international public order) as a result, or moral problems (recycled as charitable works), ceasing to be societies on an equal footing with the rest of the human race.

Sections of the population outcast in this way, whether in the South Bronx, in La Courneuve, the Altiplano of the Andes, the ranches of Caracas, the poor districts of Buenos Aires or the ‘children’s villages’ of Peru, in the shanty towns of Algiers or the Iranian villages devastated by the modernisation of the ‘white revolution’, refuse to disappear in the planetary rubbish-tips where useless fragments of humanity accumulate around the launching pad of the new History. Such resistance takes many forms, but these always combine some of the following expressions:

- Daily violence as a form of life for the gangs of abandoned juveniles who create havoc in the streets of fourth world cities, ranging through to futile murder as a way of personal affirmation.
- What I have called ‘the perverse connection’ between the disconnected peripheral economies and the centres of the world economy,\textsuperscript{26} via the economy of the narcotics traffic and other forms of criminal economy (smuggling, illegal arms dealing, prostitution, money laundering, etc.), an economy which taken as a whole may well, according to some estimates, exceed in value that of the world electronics industry.
- Desperate collective explosions, barely politicised, taking the form of riots in the big cities, such as have occurred in São Paulo, Caracas, Rosario and so many other places at other times, and which have not leaped into the headlines of the world press.
- Above all, the irrational and primitive appeal to a cultural, ethnic or religious identity, in the form of fanatical fundamentalism, such as Islamic fundamentalism in its religious version or ideological fundamentalism as in the case of Maoism exemplified by the Shining Path in Peru. This is the logic of exclusion responding to the logic of exclusion. If the
evolution of the new system makes a large part of the world population irrelevant, the individuals and societies ignored in this way, irrespective of whether they are exploited or not, are reduced to the condition of sub-humans, and reply with an independent redefinition of the criteria for humanity, and label those who integrate in the new system as non-human 'infidels', 'devils' or 'exploiters'. Once the relationship of non-relationship is established in this way, the logical consequence is suicidal resistance or a war of extermination, total alienation taken to its ultimate extremes, that is, indiscriminate and generalised terrorism as the ultimate weapon of the excluded. Fundamentalist terrorism will be – is already – the world war of the twenty-first century.

Unless the essential problems of exclusion are faced, taken in hand and resolved, whatever the role of underdevelopment involving a substantial portion of the planet, humanity will not be able to get under way on the great voyage towards collective hope. Civilisation cannot exist on an island protected by electronic security and immigration officials.

THE HARD TRANSITION TO HISTORICITY

History was never a process predetermined by an extra-social meaning, whether of divine origin or derived from the logic of productive forces. This applies equally to the new history which is beginning. In fact, the splendid perspectives which are opening out for humanity depend fundamentally on how the transition towards the new society is managed and led, starting with the problems of the past which also make up an essential part of our present. Now is the time of politics, of true politics, as a capacity for collective action to change our destiny and that of future generations. Although not in terms of the spontaneous ideology thrown up on café terraces, it can be shown (although not in this text), that politics has never been so important and its content so decisive for the daily life of societies as now. For this reason the excessive concern in many of our societies, the obsession of public opinion and in particular of the media, with the small human pains which have always been part of the administration of any country, is particularly superficial at this very moment when we are starting to catch sight of the objects of great collective debates, with uncertain solutions, in which the future of humanity is at stake. As a preliminary phase in orientation towards the future, however, the strategic decisive task is that of the politics of historical transition. The weak link in this transition is the fact that although the end of communism is irreversible, the alteration in the political situation in the former Soviet Union is not. How the process of transformation is completed depends precisely on a stabilisation of the situation there, and on the continuance of an evolution towards peace, prosperity and democracy within the family of nations. This region is about to pass through the ordeal by fire of the disintegration of the centralised economy, the abolition of the mafias of the parallel economy, democratisation of the political system, and the institutional dismemberment of the Soviet empire, towards a new association between independent states. And the peril does not lie only, nor fundamentally, in the conservative sectors of the former Soviet apparatus, but in the decision-making centres, potentially facing unemployment, of the military-industrial complex, the powerful local mafias within the separate republics, the exacerbated and irredentist nationalism (including the Russian), the Islamic fundamentalism of the Asiatic republics, and a demagogic populism capable of destroying the stability of reformist power on the altars of a personality cult for its leaders. The great process of transformation within the former Soviet Union, is faced with a political class and an intelligentsia of extraordinary immaturity, who frequently think in strictly moralist terms, which is equivalent to political irresponsibility. In fact, in the context of the direct experience which I was able to have of Soviet reality in 1989–90, one of the most surprising and most significant of my impressions is that an important force for stability and gradualism of reform was at that time precisely the KGB, which had assumed the responsibilities of the state and for the continuity of the interests of the Soviet Union as a world power, in overcoming without excessive damage the problems of social transition. Whatever the reality of this impression, what would seem essential for the historical transformation at global level is to control the powerful and – why not say it? – revolutionary centrifugal forces which are breaking through. If the social movements of all kinds which are surging up with extraordinary force are confronted without political mediation by an apparatus lacking an outlook on the future, in a situation of economic chaos, a turning back is
possible. However, as was the unanimous opinion of the Soviet political scientists taking part with me in a debate on this theme organised by the Komsomol in Moscow in May 1990, the way back would not be to Brezhnev but to Stalin, that is to say towards an implacable repression of millions of people, as the only means of maintaining power for sufficient time to ensure a succession in the interests of the apparatus. What such a reaction might trigger in terms of global confrontation could not be excluded.

In these circumstances, an essential part of the new policy of the democratic industrialised nations (that is, in terms of international institutions such as NATO) is a contribution towards the stabilisation of the situation and the gradual moving forward of perestroika. This does not imply solely, or fundamentally, bank credits or economic aid, but above all the integration of the new independent states of Eastern Europe within the Western sphere in terms of commercial exchanges, technological modernisation and common political institutions. The boldness of initiatives in this direction (along the innovative lines initiated at the London Summit of NATO in July 1990) is what is required of the big Western powers and, in particular, of the European Community, which must urge its ally the United States to avoid the temptation to establish itself as a single world-dominating power. The weaving of many threads into a fabric of relationships between the East and the West in all dimensions is the only formula guaranteeing both the irreversibility of the process of change in Eastern Europe, and the final end of the division of the world into opposing blocs.

East-West integration will not be achieved without relapses into prehistory if it is not accompanied simultaneously by a process of repair of the social, economic and cultural fragmentation affecting North–South relations. This basically means assuming responsibility for the problem of economic, technological and social development within a planetary context, as a global policy, which only governments can conduct and direct, even though its agents may be commercial enterprises within an economy which will now once and for all be a market economy. In addition to the strategy of shared development, however, which must be understood as forming part of the fundamental interests of the industrialised North, it will be necessary to deal with problems which are even deeper and more explosive, such as that of exacerbating cultural identity and intransient nationalism which threaten, in both the Third World and Europe, to redistribute the cards within the global political game, with great and destructive convulsions resulting for the collective and universalist civilisation which we are about to create. At the very moment when the technological revolution is making feasible the realisation of the historical objectives set at the time of the Enlightenment, but without falling into the implicit concurrent despotism of that time, the neo-romantic nationalism of the final years of the twentieth century is entwining with the more primitive roots of peoples and threatening a flood of xenophobic, racist and localised reaction. This may confine the construction of a new universal order within the narrow parameters of identities that cannot communicate with one another.

Of course, the transition towards a universal spirit cannot take place in abstraction, that is, without taking into account the concrete cultural identities constructed within the collective memory of societies. We must start with these as a basis, adding to them, synthesising them, sublimating them, and going beyond them without dissolving them, leaving behind their burden of mutual grievances, establishing bridges for communication, and articulating their identities within the decentralisation of political institutions, within the common space of collective imagination constituted by the audio-visual communication media. The new world order might approximate more to the federation of communities suggested by libertarian opinion, rather than to the Society of Nations, which the nation states are promulgating in order to maintain their existence in a global system. Whatever happens, it will take place within a culture communicated via the audio-visual universe and an economy structured around the global fabric of large commercial undertakings.

Finally, the transition to the new History requires political management of technological change, so that the extraordinary productive force which is being introduced into our system does not trigger resistance to the change on the part of the structural unemployed, of populations suddenly deprived of their basic values (family, natural environment), or from intellectuals ousted from their function as oracles and defenders of justice. The technological transformation cannot be achieved without a social and institutional transformation opening out paths to a way of life in which the capacity to think determines productive output.
THE NEW HORIZONS

Assuming the uncertain hypothesis that our societies are capable of managing the transition towards the full development of the current transformation along its major axis, we can go on to discuss the tasks that will be characteristic of the new history. Starting from an adequate standard of living for all citizens (however inevitably unequal), based on a substantial increase in productivity and on the amplification and diversification of the markets, we can sketch out the redefinition of the human condition, at last determining the essential features of our existence. The challenge with which we are thus faced is multi-dimensional, but can be illustrated in terms of the three great questions that it is possible to discuss in terms of structural changes only thanks to the circumstances of the new History:

1 The overcoming of the opposition between man and woman (and consequently of male domination) as a basis for establishing equality within the context of difference. This implies a radical change in personal relationships, both sexual and in the organisation of the family, and a transformation of the process of cultural reproduction and psychological socialisation. This frontier has hitherto hardly been explored so far as the feminist movement has had to fight, necessarily up to now, against more primitive forms of discrimination and more direct forms of domination. The recognition of the specificity of feminine values, joined to feminist objectives, and the transition of the culture of our societies in the sense that we are leaving behind the culture of domination and violence, for which men and women were equally responsible, is an objective of a new type which can only be envisaged beyond the society and world of poverty and violence.

2 The integration of society and the natural world, of material progress and conservation of the environment, in a dynamic relationship between ecology and economics, can overcome the pre-historical opposition between the age-old submission of humanity to a hostile nature and the revenge of the industrialised societies devouring their environmental resources as soon as productive forces become able to impose their internal logic. Scientific knowledge of the chain of cosmic interactions, the overcoming of the reign of necessity, the acceptance of the values of balance between the separate dimensions of society and of human personality, are processes creating the conditions through which the new forms of social organisation will become interstitially integrated, throughout human activity, with a respect for fundamental ecological equilibriums.

3 The distancing of ourselves from war as a collective model of destruction and the intimate link between cultural capacity and material development have done away with the antisocial constraints (hunt to eat, kill in order to seize the result of the hunt) which until a very short time ago governed the collective and individual logic of societies. At the end of this road the human being has to come to terms with itself, and must assume responsibility for its own individuality, its own personality, without rushing too far ahead in order to resolve the daily problems of survival. Naturally the new societies will be organised along institutional lines and consequently there will be inequalities, conflicts, and phenomena of domination. But the logic of these conflicts and the basis of these problems will be social, fundamentally linked to relationships between individual human beings, undermining our social legitimisation of domination and the obfuscation of conflicts by the inevitability of struggle in the appropriation of scarce resources. Once the problems of society have been defined as the expression of social relations, the expression of the ‘self’ and of its relationship to ‘the other’ and ‘others’ moves to the forefront in the shaping of patterns of behaviour. This is the step from necessity to desire as the structuring principle of conduct, a process which will probably increase individual collective anxiety, while at the same time, established within the solitude of individual being, it will offer the means by which this anxiety can be overcome, in a process of apprenticeship in selfhood which will always be fragile and uncertain. Exploration of our inner world will probably be more passionate and more complete than the inevitable and routine exploration of extra-terrestrial space.

The vertigo of the present process of historical transition will be followed by a feeling of discomposure all the more profound at the frontiers of the new History. In particular, the grand theories which explicitly and implicitly have produced the categories with which we still, inadequately, think
our world, will have proved to be completely obsolete. The ruins of Marxism are already of no use to us, not even as points of reference, because the problems signified by its concepts do not correspond to the main themes of the new human experience. The liberal tradition will have lost its capacity to differentiate between processes, thinking in terms of a polarised interaction between the individual and the state which is already being superseded in the democratic societies to give way to a growing differentiation between the values and strategies of the individuals constituting selected groups, and mobilising themselves towards cultural projects no longer anchored in the social structure. The great risk in this situation is the temptation, under pressure from the anxiety of uncertainty, to try to reconstruct a new unified theory of historical becoming, an undertaking which was justified in a world dominated by the inevitability which opposed the subject of the historical process to the dominating historical force, but which is now no longer possible. By definition a historical horizon cannot be continuously re-created on the basis of human action, whether individual or collective, given the variable geometry of the separate dimensions of society. Under these conditions, perhaps the moment has arrived to extend to human behaviour the same scientific method which we have accepted for the other expressions of material form, starting with the knowledge which the social sciences have acquired and will acquire of this behaviour and accepting from the outset the diversity and uncertainty of such knowledge. Thus, it will be necessary to accept the biological dimension of most of the factors determining behaviour, and the possibility of predicting tendencies as a proof of interpretations of social facts. To sum up, the opening of a new historical period as an evolution of action by society on itself, must be accompanied by the replacement of meta-social theories by a pluralist science of society, as the principal source of inspiration for knowledge about ourselves. At a time when, whatever the great contradictions, new horizons are opening up before our eyes, the debate on ideas must go beyond the obvious confirmation of the death-throes of the old order and venture to set out the condition and projects which will enable us to conceive the beginning of history.

Notes
17. Remarks based on a current study of the Soviet Union, conducted from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid by Manuel Castells, with fieldwork carried out September–October 1989 and in May 1990.
My reflections in this paper are based upon two premises. First, a people or a continent has the right, indeed the duty, to arrange its own affairs even if this means ignoring for the time being other issues. It is not for this reason, therefore, that I have a bad conscience about the Third World, because the unification of Germany and Europe fascinates me and I am greatly preoccupied with it. Secondly, the relations between North and South were even more dreary in the past decade than in the preceding one. There has been no real North–South dialogue, only requests from the petitioners in the South which were rejected by the Western countries. For the most part the conferences ended with minimal concessions that left the door ajar for the next conference. There has never been a North–South dialogue worthy of the name.

In the 1980s there was also, for the first time since 1960, no politically effective development strategy. In the 1960s there was a naïve technocratic strategy, drawing on the experience of the Marshall Plan, and it was believed that a strong influx of capital and technology would rapidly bring the ‘developing countries’ onto the same path as the Western industrial countries. Many countries were regarded as being on the threshold of such development and were designated ‘take-off’ countries. They are still called this today, because they have still not crossed the threshold to ‘self-sustaining’ growth.

In the 1970s a more differentiated strategy prevailed, the basis of which was the Pearson Committee Report of 1969. Basic food requirements, housing, education, employment and social security were to have priority. I still remember with joy and sadness the Tidewater Conference at the beginning of the 1970s when the leaders of the Western industrial countries came together with Lester Pearson and the president of the World Bank, Robert McNamara, and agreed upon development strategies which today would gain no consensus. The first oil crisis of 1973/4 already put an end to any practical consequences, and in July 1974 I resigned from the government.

For the 1980s the Brandt Report was available, but it had no influence on government policy; least of all its most interesting part, which was the foreword by Willy Brandt. I do not recall that any German government leader ever quoted from this report, or even mentioned it. The 1980s were characterised rather by the cynicism of the Reagan administration and thought only in terms of East–West. Only in that context did the South have any function, and in effect development aid was subordinated to military strategic interests. For the rest, Reagan advised the poor...
countries to follow the example of the US, which had become wealthy through free enterprise.

The Cold War was carried on, more obviously the longer it lasted, at the expense of the Third World. This was not only because political energies were largely absorbed by the Cold War; the development budget in relation to the military budget had a deplorably impoverished place (the ratio in most cases lying between 1:10 and 1:30), and the rearmament of the 1980s led above all in the US to an unprecedented public debt, where $300 000 million of military expenditure required $200 000 million of borrowing. That resulted in a steep rise in interest rates, which left the heavily indebted developing countries breathless. In those years the cost of servicing debt far exceeded development aid, eventually by several times.

In our relationship with the South aid is a marginal factor, but focusing attention on it enables us to push aside what is more important. This would include debt servicing and indebtedness, interest rates and raw material prices, military exports and wars fought by proxy, private investment and bank strategies, the dispositions of multinational corporations and the agricultural policy of the EC, our refusal to pursue consistent energy-saving policies and our export of waste, and above all our guidelines for the International Monetary Fund according to which everything is more important than the justified question as to how helpful one or another development project is likely to be. It is this concentration on the scale and efficiency of development projects which gives the circle of cronies a good conscience: we have helped them now for three decades and they have still made nothing out of it. The fact that ever more sacks of coffee or bales of cotton have to be delivered in order to pay for a tractor, that the International Monetary Fund determines the framework of policy in most of the developing countries - all that is lost to sight.

I admit that the practical value of my introductory remarks is that they should establish a problematic with which to approach my theme. For me it is not a matter of salvaging a development policy which might lose its impetus with the unification of Europe, for there is unfortunately no such policy. The question is whether this unification could create the opportunity, in the medium term, for attaining a European development policy worthy of the name. I am less concerned about whether the share of public aid for development might decline by one-tenth of 1 per cent of GDP (which is roughly the margin in terms of which fluctuations up or down can be conceived) than with the hope that development can become a dimension of European politics. Development policy - and this is for me the fruit of a quarter century of reflection on the subject - is either a dimension of all policy or it is a cosmetic intended all over all to make us look more beautiful than we are.

When it is argued on the basis of particular cases that the unification of Europe is taking place at the expense of the Third World I find many, though not all, of the arguments rather weak. Julius Nyerere, with whom I have felt myself bound in friendship for two decades, regrets that it is no longer possible to count on the help of the communist countries 'in the struggle for greater justice'. Here it must be asked what this aid brought to the countries of the South. I can recall no conference at which the votes of the East were decisive. Support by the East was frequently clear and unequivocal because rejection by the Western industrial countries - who had a decisive influence - was certain. Where practical aid was concerned the poor East was as unforthcoming as the rich West. I am also unimpressed by the argument that Western private investment is now going to Eastern Europe and no longer to the South; and I am surprised that this argument comes from people who previously complained about the exploitation such investment involved. Moreover, the share of the South in the investment by Western firms had already declined drastically in the past 15 years. In the 1960s approximately 30 per cent of all foreign investment went to the South, whereas today it is roughly 10 per cent, and it is concentrated on a few countries. Half the German private investment goes to Brazil, and almost all of this to two areas of agglomeration where it would be better, on ecological grounds, not to make any further investments. It may happen that the trend of recent years will become stronger, but I think East Germany, Poland or Hungary will be competing with Spain or Eire rather than with Peru or Kenya.

The Frankfurt social scientist, Lothar Brock, sees three fears and three hopes arising from the unification of Europe. The first fear is that the
European unification and the global community

negotiating position of the Third World vis-a-vis the industrial countries will be further weakened because the East–West opposition no longer exists. The second is ‘that the scope for political action will be further restricted as a result of the consolidation of Western hegemony and the withdrawal of socialism as an alternative path of development’. The third fear is that the Eastern industrial countries could become ‘competitors for economic and developmental cooperation’ from the West.

As to the first concern, it should be said that the negotiating position of the South was already miserably weak, and I can recall no major conference at which an East–West opposition – even if it was attempted – played a part. The second concern needs to be substantiated. Socialist models of development have little chance in the future, but that would not be bad if the capitalist model showed itself capable of producing better results. Fundamentally – and notably in Africa – all models have failed. It could be the case that the politico-economic pressure of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund will now become stronger and less constrained, if that is possible. But it could also be that the absence of an ostensible socialist alternative increases the chances that at least the right questions will be asked and a modification of the market model achieved, which can help the countries of the South in particular instances. So far as economic competition is concerned, it might happen, now that the EC has low-wage countries on its doorstep, that many activities in the field of improving wage levels, or even attaining parity, which were previously focused on Southeast Asia, will in future be directed to Central and Eastern Europe. But we should not forget that despite fluctuations of policy this has been the case for many years. Moreover, I can conceive that this will look very different in five years’ time, since by then, at least in East Germany, but also in other countries of Eastern Europe, wage levels will have risen substantially.

I can also conceive that debt agreements with Poland or Hungary – Romania’s debts are minimal due to the rigorous forced savings policy of the Ceaucescu regime – will have priority for Western banks and governments over those with Mexico or Argentina. But this also has two sides. Large-scale debt reduction in Eastern Europe can very well set a precedent, and it will not be possible in the long run to deny to Côte d’Ivoire – whose currency moreover is linked with the French franc – what is made available to Bulgaria. Finally, as regards development aid, which is now called ‘development policy cooperation’, it will certainly be necessary and helpful to prescribe any reduction, whether absolute or as a proportion of GDP, in development aid by the states concerned. But I insist that aid is a marginal element in our relationship with the South, and if the South is really to be helped then probably it is still marginal compared with a cessation of aid.

Brock also refers to three hopes. First, the improvement of the framework for settling regional conflicts; secondly, the chance to increase the means available for development aid as a result of disarmament; and thirdly, ‘the hope of a new conception or greater efficacy in cooperation for development’. The end of the political and ideological confrontation between East and West may also lead to a more critical view of the increasing structural inadequacy of the capitalist economic system.

We should not underestimate the first of these hopes. If no more proxy wars are necessary, and if the US and the states of the former Soviet Union can establish a firm interest in peace, for example in South and East Africa, this could spare the South many horrors. The second hope will certainly not be realised by Germany or the US transferring 50 pfennigs or cents to the South for every mark or dollar that they save on armaments. But even if they transferred only 10 per cent of the savings, that would amount over time to sums equal to the previous budget for development. Something else could be still more important: the reduction of armament expenditures relieves the capital market, which investment in the East is exhausting, and drives interest rates – forced up by an investment boom in the East – down. It is quite conceivable that this will make possible, within a few years, substantial debt relief.

I should like to formulate Brock’s third hope in a somewhat different way. If people in the East and the West no longer confront the threat that was always alleged to come from the other side, then they can become free to observe the crucial reality of the closing years of the twentieth century; namely, the 3500 million human beings whose numbers are rapidly increasing because they cannot overcome their poverty. A publicist who wanted to make a reputation was always preoccupied until now with East–West questions, not with those of the North–South. When I was a minister I could count on the fingers of one hand the number of journalists who understood anything about North–South issues, but that will soon
Erhard Eppler

change. And we shall no longer pose the misleading question whether capitalism or socialism had the right prescription for the South – for neither of them had it so long as they transferred the experience of the North to the South.

We shall learn to ask how independent development would look in the case of Colombia, Nigeria or Burma. We shall ask how countries of the South could associate regionally in order to satisfy their basic needs, especially in foodstuffs, so that they could participate in the world market without being exploited. And above all we shall begin to ask what must change in our own technology, financial, agricultural, energy and trade policies, so that the South has a chance of independent development. We now have the opportunity to create a Europe that is open to and for the South, but we do not make use of it when we simply complain about what is being prepared in Europe with reference to the neglected South. We use it only if we ask incessantly and tenaciously how Europe must look if it is finally to become capable of a partnership with the South.

Willy Brandt once suggested that in every West German government proposal for discussion by the cabinet there should appear in future, next to the note on the financial implications, a note on the consequences that might be expected for the Third World. That would oblige every government department – economics and finance, trade, agriculture, science, defence – to think in terms of development policy, and it would lead above all to development policy perspectives being taken seriously and discussed openly in cabinet meetings. Why should something of this kind not be possible also in the EC Commission? The countries of the South only have a chance if we change ourselves and become capable of partnership. So far this has not happened, either in the West or in the East.

A reordering of the economic relations between North and South will only be possible when one of the Northern giants leaves the common front and begins to negotiate compromises with the South. Neither the US nor Japan enter into consideration here, only the EC, which has to become independent in its development policy. That will happen more quickly the stronger it becomes. Naturally the EC cannot simply adopt the positions taken by the South, which in any case are diverse, but it can for example, through its votes in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, establish new guidelines, can press for a new international monetary system, can take the lead in debt relief, can carry through an agricultural policy which also helps the South. Within the EC there is a readiness to do this in the Netherlands, in Denmark, and to some extent in France. It was my dream 20 years ago to make the weight of the German Federal Republic useful in such a European mediating role. It was too early then, but must it still be too early in the 1990s?

If I am inclined to be optimistic it is because it is easier today to appeal to common interests. The frequently affirmed interdependence – the mutual dependence of North and South – never existed economically. The South is economically far more dependent on the North than vice versa. We can remain unmoved when millions of people die in Bangladesh or Ethiopia, but it is a different matter where ecology is concerned. The significance which the destruction of tropical rain forests, or desertification, has for ourselves can be demonstrated. The consciousness that there is a single earth, and hence the need for a global policy, will be more rapidly and firmly implanted through ecology than through economics. And Europe can become the continent where this is initially crystallised in policy decisions, institutions, and even legislation.
STRATEGIES OF REFORMIST SOCIALIST PARTIES IN A MIXED ECONOMY: THE SWEDISH MODEL

Walter Korpi

Within the very broad topic of the mixed economy I am going to discuss here four types of problems which are faced by social democratic labour movements – unions and social democratic parties – in the Western nations. These problem areas are: (1) the types of coalitions that can be created between workers and other interest groups in Western societies, primarily salaried employees; (2) the nature of the relations between the social democratic party and the trade unions; (3) the possibilities of diminishing inequality and maintaining full employment in Western nations; and (4) the consequences of these policies for economic growth and efficiency.

The above problems are of course, very broad ones, to say the least, and I am here only able to touch upon them. I will discuss them in relation­ship to the development of the labour movement in Sweden. In some ways the Swedish Social Democratic Party has been the most successful of the Western reformist socialist parties – in terms of electoral support and in terms of number of years in government. During the postwar years there is no party on the left which has been equally successful in these terms, and on the right it is only the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party which can compete.

I will therefore try to discuss what can be learned from the Swedish developments since the 1930s up to the present worldwide economic crises and high unemployment levels since the mid-1970s. In the 1930s as well as in the early postwar decades, the Swedish Social Democrats were relatively successful with their policies, which are often brought together under a rather diffuse concept – the Swedish Model. In the 1980s they were less successful. I will close with some observations on the situation in the early 1990s.

SOCIALISM OF THE FUTURE
Eastern Europe also throws a shadow over the social democratic parties, the traditional arch-enemies of the communists. At present the issue of economic democracy is therefore not on the political agenda in any realistic way.

To discover the distinctive characteristics of social democratic parties, we thus have to look at the second step, the creation or achievement of social democracy. In the 1930s in Sweden 'social democracy' was conceived primarily as two things; (1) the combatting of high unemployment during the Great Depression; and (2) getting rid of discriminating poor law treatment of those who for various reasons were unable to support themselves. During the 1930s and the postwar period the most immediate social democratic project has obviously been the attempt to create a welfare state, which decreases inequality and maintains full employment at the same time as it contributes to economic growth and economic efficiency.

As is well known, full employment tends to increase equality and also economic growth. Variations in the level of unemployment have direct effects on distributions of factor income but also on economic growth. In mainstream economic theory, however, equality is often seen as counteracting economic efficiency. The late well-known American economist Arthur Okun once described the choice between equality and efficiency as the 'Big Trade-Off'. Standard economic theory argues that inequality is necessary on economic growth. In mainstream economic theory, however, equality is often seen as counteracting economic efficiency. The late well-known American economist Arthur Okun once described the choice between equality and efficiency as the 'Big Trade-Off'. Standard economic theory argues that inequality is necessary for economic efficiency. According to this theory, by increasing economic efficiency and growth, inequality contributes to the welfare of everybody. It can be noted that in these respects neoclassical economic theory has very much the same arguments as political liberalism in its market liberal version. It is also assumed that differences in rewards, resulting in inequalities of status and of results, are beneficial not only for the rich but also for the poor and thus in the best interest of everybody.

One of the central issues which distinguishes social democratic parties from the parties to their right is the stand they take on equality. Equality of result, not just equality of opportunity, is probably the crucial touchstone for the left–right continuum. But the degree to which equality can be achieved is variable. Therefore social democratic parties in practice come to differ among themselves in the extent to which they accept inequality. In some countries, social democratic parties are quite 'liberal' in that they accept a rather high degree of inequality; in other countries they are less liberal.

Party names do not always inform us very well about the actual policies which different parties stand for. Therefore I think that the best criterion for evaluating the type of policies which a social democratic party stands for is not primarily its name but instead the nature of its relationship to the trade unions. Trade unions for manual workers are definitely class-based. Unions can therefore be assumed to articulate the class interests of the workers, as they perceive them.

Now the manual or industrial working class has always been too small to form a political majority. Social democratic parties have therefore always been forced to create coalitions with other classes or interest groups. They are therefore tempted to compromise the interests of workers. To the extent that social democratic parties retain the support of manual trade unions, we can assume that working-class interests have been protected in a satisfactory way. If, however, the manual unions protest very strongly against the policies of a social democratic party, then there would appear to be problems with the policy of the party.

EQUALITY, FULL EMPLOYMENT, AND HIGH TAXES

If we take the decrease of income inequality as a measuring rod for the success of a social democratic party, Swedish social democracy has been relatively successful. We now have reliable data on the distribution of disposable household income (after taxes and transfers) for 12 Western countries around 1980 (Table 1). These figures show that inequality is lowest in Sweden, followed by Finland and Norway. Then come Germany and Britain, while Switzerland, Australia and Canada, the Netherlands and France follow towards the high side, and the highest degree of inequality is found in Israel and the United States. Spain would probably also come towards the end of relatively high inequality, although the Spanish data are not quite comparable with the others.

Sweden has also managed to retain a very low
Strategies of reformist socialist parties in a mixed economy: the case of the Swedish model

Table 1  Inequality in distribution of disposable household income (equivalents) in 12 countries around 1980 (Gini index x 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gini</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>30.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

rate of unemployment. During the 1980s the average Swedish unemployment rate was below 3 per cent. In Europe, only Switzerland has retained a similar level of unemployment, but only by expelling a large proportion of its foreign 'guest workers'. During the past few years, in Norway and Austria, which used to have low unemployment at the Swedish level, social democratic governments have allowed unemployment rates to increase close to the 5 per cent level. This is of course still low compared to the figures of around 10 per cent found in Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. And of course they cannot be compared with the unemployment catastrophes found in Ireland and Spain with about 17–20 per cent unemployment.

There is, however, one aspect in which Sweden comes at the less popular end of the scale, and that is in taxation levels. Sweden now clearly has much higher than average tax rates in Europe, in terms of direct income taxation as well as in terms of indirect taxation. Not even Swedish Social Democrats however are especially fond of paying high taxes.

DEFINING THE INTERESTS OF CITIZENS THROUGH POLICY STRATEGIES

The question now is how Swedish social democracy has managed to achieve all this, that is: (1) put practically everybody to work, women as well as men (in Sweden also married women with small children generally work, at least part-time); (2) decrease inequalities in economic rewards; (3) make citizens pay the highest taxes in the world with no major 'tax revolts'; and (4) doing this in a situation where privately-owned large corporations, the Swedish multinationals, are very strong.

I think the explanation has to be sought in the ways citizens have come to define their interests, something which in turn has been affected by: (1) historical circumstances; (2) the types of class coalitions that have been created; (3) the societal institutions which have been built; and (4) the policy inventions that have been made.

People act individually and collectively to further what they see as their interests. What they come to view as their interests is however not given once and for all. Here many different, potential lines of cleavages compete – such as occupation, income, ethnicity, race, religion or region. Interests are defined by giving more or less weight to the many different lines of cleavage that are always present, that is by answering the question: who am I? in practical terms. Am I a manual worker, a salaried employee or are we all wage earners? Am I rich or poor or somewhere in the middle of the income distribution? Am I a Protestant or a Catholic? Black or white? Spanish, German or Swede? From the South or from the North? The relative importance of these potential factors is not given once and for all but is in practice determined by historical factors, social institutions, and class coalitions.

Historical circumstances have favoured the development of the Swedish labour movement. Since Sweden finally lost its position as one of the great powers of Europe in 1809 it has had an ethnically homogenous population. The Reformation in the sixteenth century made it Protestant, so that Sweden has not had the type of religious mass parties which have been very strong in countries such as Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, where they have successfully competed with socialist parties. By and large the feudal tradition has been weak in Sweden. Instead we have had a large class of medium and small farmers, which have formed their own political party, thereby splitting bourgeois unity, and at crucial times, in the 1930s and 1950s, entering into coalitions with the social democrats.

THE HISTORICAL COMPROMISE

But the history of the Swedish labour movement and the development of the Swedish Model is not an entirely peaceful picture. Up to the early
1930s, Sweden was actually the leading country in the world in terms of strikes and lockouts. Relative to the size of its labour force, in no other country had so many working days been used for industrial disputes as in Sweden. Both workers and employers were well organised and this generated long and intensive strikes and lockouts.

When the Social Democratic government was formed in 1932, for the first time with just about 50 per cent of the votes for the left parties, the situation changed. The Social Democrats could now use the power of the government to combat the high levels of unemployment during the Great Depression. They now had a political alternative and were no longer limited to fight on the labour market, through strikes, to improve their situation. In 1932, well before the publication of Keynes’ *General Theory*, the Social Democrats introduced a policy invention – demand management with expansive measures to get the economy going and to create demand and jobs. Economic historians debate to what extent this policy was successful. At any rate it was seen as very successful by the voters and therefore Social Democrats increased their political support during the 1930s.

The conflict strategies of employers have been of importance for the development of the Swedish Model. The strong and apparently stable political support for the Social Democrats generated a new situation also for the employers. The question was if employers would continue their militant strategy against the labour movement or attempt some kind of a compromise solution. Among the employers, the majority groups consisting largely of home market industries overruled the militant minority of large multinational companies, and started negotiations with the labour movement. Here strong and centralised employers’ organisations were confronting a strong labour movement with apparently increasing political support. This led to what I have called the Historical Compromise between capital and labour (Korpi 1978). The Historical Compromise was developed in the second half of the 1930s, when the Swedish Social Democrats managed to achieve what the Italian Communist Party did not succeed with in the 1970s.

The formal part of the Swedish Historical Compromise was the so-called Main Agreement between the unions and the employers, negotiated between 1936 and 1938. The most important part, however, was an informal agreement or understanding between labour and capital to cooperate to generate economic growth. The Social Democratic government would create favourable economic conditions for private industry. Employers would not directly intervene in the political struggle between the parties, but would act as one of the pressure groups in society. The Social Democratic government would be able to use its power to redistribute the results of economic growth. Strikes and lockouts almost disappeared. For a long time to come Sweden was known as the country of industrial peace. It should be noted, however, that this peace was based not on the absence of conflicts of interests, but was a bargained solution in a situation of very strong tensions between well-organised opponents.

The following elements were important in this Historical Compromise. By using a policy invention – demand management policies – the Social Democratic Party was able to forge a strong basis for cooperation with the unions of the manual workers based on the policy of full employment. There was also coalition building with the farm workers and the farmers to support this type of policy, which also indirectly benefited them. Note that around 1930 labour governments in Britain and Australia refused to use this type of policy. Instead they relied on policies of economic restraint, which increased unemployment and generated severe splits between the labour governments and the unions in both countries.

In Sweden, on the contrary, unions strongly supported the policies of the Social Democratic government. This formed the basis for unified, centralised unions, something which was further developed during the postwar period. This centralisation of the union movement gave it a capacity for strategic action, a capacity to choose between strategies. It was now no longer limited to one strategy only, that of fighting for the highest possible wage increases. The union movement now had the basic strategic capacity, that of waiting in order to develop alternative courses of action.

**THE REHN-MEIDNER MODEL**

The 1930s were of course the formative period of the Swedish Model, but the postwar decades were crucial for its development. In the years following the Second World War, labour movements in Europe faced two significant problems. One had to do with the inflation–unemployment dilemma, the other with their relations to the growing ‘new middle class’ of salaried employees. The inflation–unemployment dilemma is
related to the fact that when there is a very high demand on the labour market and unemployment is low, inflation tends to accelerate, partly via wage increases. In many countries during the postwar years, social democratic governments attempted to solve this dilemma by asking unions to practise wage restraint, or by introducing wage freezes. In the late 1940s the Swedish Social Democratic government also attempted this method. It became evident, however, that unions cannot act as organisations fighting against higher wages for their members. This would of course undermine the legitimacy of the union organisation, and create strong tensions between unions and a social democratic government. These types of tension were indeed building up in Sweden, when a new policy invention was made, resulting in a strategy which avoided many of these problems.

This policy invention was developed by two union advisers, Gösta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner. The starting point for the Rehn-Meidner Model is the assumption that full employment without high inflation cannot be maintained by creating a generally high level of demand and high profits in the economy. Since the level of demand varies between sectors of the labour market, before enough demand is created in the most sluggish sectors of the labour market, the whole economy would be overheated with rapid inflation as a result. Instead the overall level of demand and profits in the economy should be relatively restrained. This would generate tendencies to unemployment in certain sectors of the economy, but these tendencies to unemployment should be counteracted by an active and selective labour market policy. This selective labour market policy would intervene in pockets where unemployment appears, create jobs, offer retraining, or move workers to other sectors of the economy or other parts of the country.

By maintaining a relatively restrained level of demand and profits, combined with an active and selective labour market policy, full employment could be maintained, inflation would be contained, and unions could function in their normal role as organisations for increasing wages and improving the conditions of workers. This policy also avoided very strong tensions between the unions and the Social Democratic government. For 20–30 years this proved to be a workable formula for the Swedish labour movement, which allowed for a close alliance between the party and the unions, and also generated a good amount of economic growth.

TOWARDS AN INSTITUTIONAL WELFARE STATE

The development of the welfare state came to be of importance for forging a class coalition between industrial workers and the new middle classes, the salaried employees. In this area institutions have traditionally been significant for the definitions of the interests of citizens. Here three different types of strategies have been developed.

The earliest strategy for affecting the ways in which citizens come to define their interests was the Bismarckian type of occupationally segmented social insurance, which was supported by Catholic-conservative groups in continental Europe. This involves the creation of separate social insurance programmes for different occupational groups, such as industrial workers, agricultural workers, seamen, railroad employees, miners, the self-employed, farmers, salaried private employees, and public employees. Benefits were to be related to the incomes of the different groups and thus to separate different groups from each other. The idea behind this system was to avoid interests becoming defined on the basis of class, and instead to support a segmentation of interests between different occupational groups. These types of social insurance programmes are found, for example, in Germany, Austria, Belgium, France and Spain.

The second strategy was the social liberal strategy to allow governments to provide only a basic minimum for everybody, a safety net below which no one would be allowed to fall. Central here are universal but flat-rate benefits; that is, low benefits at the poverty line for everybody. On top of this, each group should be allowed and encouraged to create its own system of improvements and income protection. This strategy has been favoured by liberals, especially in Britain. It tends to introduce splits between on the one hand workers, who come to depend on minimum arrangements, and on the other hand salaried employees, who often develop separate, additional programmes.

The postwar Swedish welfare state came to generate a third type of model by combining universal coverage with income-related benefits in pensions and sickness insurance. In Sweden there thus emerged what has been referred to as an institutional type of welfare state, where all citizens were included (Korpi 1983, Chapter 8). It was of primary importance that manual workers and the new middle classes – salaried employees – were covered by the same programmes and
therefore came to define their interests in more similar ways than they would otherwise have done.

This type of institutional welfare state is not highly redistributive in the sense that its benefits only or primarily go to the poor. The institutional welfare state thus does not exercise 'positive discrimination' in favour of the poor. However, by giving benefits to the rich and the middle-income earners as well as to the poor, the institutional welfare state tends to create a communality of interests between different social groups. Within this type of welfare state, by helping themselves the better-off citizens were at the same time supporting programmes which also included the poor. Since everybody benefited from the welfare state, everybody was also willing to pay for it through taxes. The taxes you paid could be seen as being for your own benefit, not just for some poor people, who perhaps are poor because they do not want to work. Therefore, the institutional welfare state becomes large in terms of the proportion of GDP that is used for social transfers. While 'positive discrimination' for the poor is highly redistributive, such programmes tend to become limited in size and this strategy ends up with discrimination against the poor. In practice, because of its size the institutional welfare state in the end tends to become much more redistributive.

When the economic crises after 1973 hit Sweden, and the bourgeois government in the late 1970s started to question the welfare state and propose cutbacks, it encountered widespread opposition. This is because proposals for cutting back the welfare state threatened the interests of all citizens, who benefited from it in one way or another. Cutbacks were not just the concern of the poor, who tend to be seen by many people as not willing to work as much as others and therefore have themselves to blame. In this institutional type of welfare state the middle classes also benefited from the welfare programmes and were therefore willing to defend them and to pay high taxes to support them. Another area of reform which turned out to be important for developing common interests between workers and salaried employees concerned legislation on employee influence at the workplace. Legislation initiated in the first half of the 1970s concerned improved health and safety arrangements at the workplace as well as a modest amount of co-determination for employees in relation to their employers. Such reforms underlined the common situation of dependence on their employers in the case of both white and blue-collar workers, and probably contributed to forging class alliances between them.

**ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY AND GROWTH**

A comparatively reasonable level of economic efficiency and growth are, at least in the long run, necessary conditions for the legitimacy of any government. In addition to the lack of political and civil rights in the countries of 'real socialism' in Eastern Europe, their very poor record of growth in standards of living in comparison with the Western countries probably contributed significantly to the collapse of these regimes. Studies in economic history indicate that among Western countries the very rich ones have tended to have slower economic growth than those which are less rich. This illustrates the so-called 'catch-up effect', according to which the less rich countries can borrow technology and capital from the richer ones, have larger labour-force reserves in the agricultural sector, and have not yet developed large tertiary or service sectors with very low growth potential (Maddison 1982). In the 1950s Sweden became one of the very richest among the OECD countries, and it maintained this position by and large up to the late 1980s. In the 1980s Sweden's GDP growth per capita was about average among rich OECD countries such as the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Denmark, the Netherlands, West Germany and France (Table 2).

It is also interesting to see that the Swedish way of maintaining full employment via an active labour market policy was not exceptionally costly. Figures from 1987 indicate that at this time public expenditure on labour market policies (unemployment benefits and early retirement) accounted for somewhat less than 3 per cent of GDP (Table 3). At this time countries such as Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands spent much more on labour market policies (5.0–4.0 per cent) and Britain spent about the same proportion as Sweden. But in these other countries, unemployment ranged from 8 to 11 per cent and most of expenditure was on unemployment benefits. In Sweden, unemployment was less than 2 per cent and most expenditures were on active measures, such as job creation.

The worldwide economic crisis, which was triggered by the so-called oil shocks in 1973 and 1979, generated a new political situation in Western countries. For the first time since the Second
Strategies of reformist socialist parties in a mixed economy: the case of the Swedish model

Table 2 Growth of GDP per capita in 19 OECD countries 1950–1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>—</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.5</td>
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<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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</table>

Average 3.4 3.9 2.0 1.9

Table 3 Total expenditure on labour market policies as percent of GDP, expenditure on active labour market measures, and unemployment in 19 OECD-countries 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total expenditure on labour market policies as % of GDP</th>
<th>Of which 'active' measures (%)</th>
<th>Unemployment as % of labour force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ireland 5.1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17.5</td>
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<td>2. Denmark 5.0</td>
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<td>4. Netherlands 4.0</td>
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<td>6. France 3.1</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>19. Switzerland 0.4</td>
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</table>

World War, mass unemployment has returned and is accepted by policymakers and to a large extent also by voters. There have been many attempts to explain the new high unemployment rates. One of the major hypotheses is phrased in terms of rigid wages, which have not decreased in
face of increasing raw material prices and changing terms of trade of the European countries. Wages have therefore become too high and have priced workers out of the labour market. In some countries this ‘wage-gap’ hypothesis may have been of some importance. But this explanation does not take us very far in understanding the continuing high levels of unemployment. Thus, for example, Britain and the Netherlands, which accepted 10 per cent unemployment levels, were probably not more severely hit by the oil crises than Sweden or Austria, both of which maintained full employment.

Another hypothesis is that unemployment is again used by governments as a way of controlling inflation, of maintaining a favourable level of profits in private firms, and also for disciplining workers and avoiding the type of radical political developments which we saw in the 1960s and early 1970s. These include events such as those in Paris in 1968, the ‘hot autumn’ of 1969 with major strike waves in Germany and Italy, the unseating of a Conservative government in Britain in 1973 through a miners’ strike, and the generally increasing strength of organised labour and of unions in a situation of full employment.

The increases in unemployment rates following the ‘oil shocks’ were seen as caused by OPEC and not by governments. Hence they came to be more or less accepted by voters, at least to the extent that it has been possible to win elections with mass unemployment, something which no one thought possible in the 1960s. Whatever the causes are, this is a new and very difficult situation for the social democratic parties.

SWEDISH SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN THE 1990s

When the Swedish Social Democrats returned to power in 1982, they faced a very difficult economic situation. In addition to the worldwide recession with very high levels of unemployment abroad, Sweden had acquired huge budget deficits and balance of payment problems with increasing foreign debts. In this situation the new government introduced a drastic devaluation of the Kroner (16 per cent) as a central part of a drive to get Sweden out of the crisis via an export-led industrial expansion. This massive devaluation lowered the real wages of Swedish workers. However, unions refrained from asking for wage compensation in order to allow export industries to increase their profits and thereby to be able to increase production and employment. To a considerable extent this new strategy was successful. Profits of private firms increased markedly. Values of stocks in private companies soared. The Stockholm stock exchange roughly doubled the value of its stocks each year throughout the 1980s, something which led to a dramatic change in the distribution of property within the country. A considerable proportion of profits has been channelled back into investment in Sweden as well as abroad.

However, this new Social Democratic strategy also came to have other consequences for the party of a more negative type. It was launched in a context where Swedish employers had changed their strategy in relation to the labour movement. Largely as a reaction to the proposals on ‘Wage Earners’ Funds’ and co-determination laws during the 1970s, Swedish employers, led by the directors of the large Swedish multinationals such as Volvo, developed a very militant strategy against the labour movement. An important part of this strategy was to undermine the unity of the union movement by breaking down the pattern of economy-wide collective bargaining, which had given a very central role, both economically and politically, to the unions. During the 1980s the employers were successful in thwarting these economy-wide negotiations, and introducing instead branch-level bargaining. By becoming split into competing groups the unions had again lost their capacity for a choice of strategy. Again demands for wage increases to keep up with the demands of other unions came to be their major alternative. At the same time employers wanted to use some part of their high profits for increasing the wages and salaries of selected groups of employees, such as sections of skilled workers and upper-level managerial personnel. This led to increasing wage differentials and the breakup of customary wage relationships. With the private salaried employees leading the way, other groups attempted to increase their wages, including the public sector where wage development had been relatively retarded. This generated considerable tensions among unions.

In this situation the Social Democratic government had to put pressure on the union movement to restrain wage increases of their members in order to maintain high profits and a favourable climate for investment. This occurred in a situation where average wage earners had seen their real wages decline since the mid-1970s. Needless to say this strategy created strong tensions between the union movement and the Social Democratic
government. In a situation of full employment, unions were asked to pressure their members into a continued acceptance of low wage increases, while at the same time the stock market jumped to record heights, and profits markedly increased as did the salaries of selected groups of employees.

In the late 1980s, together with the Liberal Party, the Social Democratic government also developed a proposal for fundamental tax reforms. Although for different reasons the tax system needed to be reformed, the main thrust of the proposal was seen to be a drastic reduction of the progressiveness of the tax system. At least in the short run such a reduction of marginal tax rates would of course primarily favour high and middle-income earners, not low-income workers. This proposal came to be seen by many workers as another indication that the Social Democratic government was no longer furthering the interests of the working class. While the new tax proposal was being debated, during a 12-month period from early 1989 to early 1990, opinion polls indicated that the Social Democrats lost about 10 percentage points of their support and they lost the elections in 1991. This decline came largely among manual workers.

In the 1990s the Swedish Social Democrats thus face a very difficult situation. Twice before, in the 1930s and 1950s they managed to strengthen their positions by relying on new policies: the invention of demand management policies before Keynes in the 1930s, and the invention of the Rehn-Meidner model in the 1950s. In the 1980s, however, they could rely on no special policy invention. Instead they were basically forced back to the strategies which many social democratic parties had practised during the 1930s as well as during the postwar period; that is, attempting to improve the climate for private enterprise by increasing profits, while relying on the unions to restrain wages and to silence the workers. As in other countries, this turned out to be a very dangerous strategy. It generated strong tensions between government and unions, and at the same time accelerated the centrifugal forces among employees, tending to separate the interests of employees in different income groups. Whether or not Swedish Social Democrats will be able to develop new policy strategies to unify workers and salaried employees and regain the support of the electorate remains to be seen.

References
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