

Globalism and the Left

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If imperialism is the latest stage of capitalism, globalism is the latest stage of imperialism – and, yet, nowhere in the whole literature of the Left¹ is there any evidence of a systematic attempt to understand, let alone combat, the havoc being wreaked on Third World countries by capital in its latest avatar. Instead, the Left has either sought refuge from the storms of change in the Orthodox Marxist Church, intoning capitalism is capitalism is capitalism and rubbishing the disbelievers, or, while accepting the epochal shift in capitalism, continued to resort to the particular (Marxist) analysis of a particular (industrial) period to envisage capitalism's early demise, hopefully at its own hands.

The first lot and the more important² maintain that the universalisation of capitalism is no new thing – that it was always global (in intent, presumably, if not in deed), only now it is more so. And the opposition to capitalism is still in place. The nation state has not been overrun by global capital, there's still room for manoeuvre there; the polity still allows of enough democracy for us to take advantage of it in our fight against capital; the working class (in the developed capitalist countries) is still the agent of change and working-class organisation the vehicle of change. To depart from any of these eternal verities and assert that there is an epochal change in capitalism – at least as significant as the transition from mercantile capitalism to industrial capitalism – which requires us to rethink our strategies and realign our forces, is to succumb to the disease of 'the post-modern Left' and all those others who declare, with Thatcher, that there is no alternative (TINA) to capitalism. Merely to utter the word globalisation, which, according to this 'school', is a right-wing shibboleth deriving from neo-liberal ideology, is to sing hosannas to capitalism while laying premature wreaths on a living, breathing socialism.

Hence, its followers reject the term

globalisation and those of us who use it to describe the unprecedented universalisation of capitalism – except that universalisation does not quite describe it, being more of a thinking word, abstract, conceptual, whereas globalisation is a doing word, a happening word, concrete. Globalisation is a process, not a concept, globalism is the project. And the project is imperialism. To dismiss globalisation as a right-wing thesis, to traduce it as ‘globaloney’ and saddle it with post-modernism and/or identity politics is not to dismiss capitalist triumphalism, but to evade it – to retreat, in fact, to the safety of the old barricades and throw stones at capitalism like some intellectual intifada. Worse, it is to imply that there is no alternative (TINA) to ‘metropolitan’ working-class struggle and ‘metropolitan’ working-class organisation – and that the exploited and immiserated workers and peasants of the Third World are no match for a marauding, globalising capitalism.

How did this lot get into this predicament? Mostly, because of a top-down analysis, from capitalism and its inherent weaknesses to renewed opportunities and possibilities for working-class struggle, not from observing the lack of struggle, movement, organisation all around us and asking why. Why is capital so strong? Why is the working class so weak? What has brought about the not inconsiderable changes in their relationship? What are their consequences? Whom does this resurgent capitalism hit hardest? Where are exploitation and ecological devastation at their most unbearable? Are the new forces of resistance, if not of revolution, to be found here? Whom has capital got on its side, and what are the sites of struggle? These are random questions, but the point of them is to find out where we are at in relation to capital, not where capital is at in relation to itself, and to take us away from

- maintaining that the industrial working class is still the chief agent of resistance to capitalism – without examining its present weaknesses and strengths;
- raising every little strike in Europe and the US to the level of insurrection and thereby transferring the burden of protest to the working class alone;
- ignoring the plight and fight of Third World workers who, under globalisation, bear the brunt of exploitation;
- ignoring the ‘new’ imperialism of globalism;
- ignoring the erosion of civil society and local democracy by nation states in cahoots with transnational corporations (TNCs);
- overlooking the possibility of new political and cultural forces opening out to an understanding of capital and a consciousness of class.

The second lot believe that, given that capital needs less and less (living) labour and, without such labour, there is no surplus value, capitalism will die of its own contradictions. According to Ramtin, for instance, ‘the heightening of the inherent contradictions’ between a ‘social system of productive relations based on value and accumulation (that is, based on the exploitation of wage labour)’ and an ‘automation/information technology’ which spells ‘the displacement of living labour’ drives the system towards ‘its own negation – that is, the

breakdown of capitalism'.³ More succinctly: 'at a certain stage the quantitative displacement of living labour generates a qualitative break in the organisation and structure of capital production'.⁴

What both these 'schools' have in common, though, is an unthinking adherence to theories and concepts that belonged principally to the industrial period of capitalism that Marx was writing in and about. And, although some of those findings still hold good today, Marx himself would require us to re-examine them in the light of the massive changes that have taken place at the level of the productive forces since his time, and throw away what is not applicable – creating in the process a Marxism relevant to our times. In the final analysis, the Marxist method of analysis always remains.

Marxism is a way of understanding, of interpreting the world, in order to change it. It is the only mode of (social) investigation in which the solution is immanent in the analysis. No other mode holds out that possibility. That is what is unique about Marxism. But, for such analysis to be current and up-to-date and yielding of solutions to contemporary problems, it must be prepared to abandon comforting orthodoxies and time-bound dogma. It must dare to catch history on the wing, as Marx did. For Marxism, as Braverman points out, 'is not merely an exercise in satisfying intellectual curiosity, nor an academic pursuit, but a theory of revolution and thus a tool of combat'.⁵ It is to that task that we have to address ourselves afresh, under changed circumstances, testing Marx himself on the touchstone of his method, based as it is on an examination of the forces of production at any given time, the social relations of production emanating from them and the dialectical relationship between the two.⁶

Quite clearly, the technological revolution of the past three decades has resulted in a qualitative leap in the productive forces to the point where capital is no longer dependent on labour in the same way as before, to the same extent as before, in the same quantities as before and in the same place as before. Its assembly lines are global, its plant is movable, its workforce is flexible. It can produce ad hoc, just-in-time, and custom-build mass production, without stockpiling or wastage, laying off labour as and when it pleases. And, instead of importing cheap labour, it can move to the labour pools of the Third World, where labour is captive and plentiful – and move from one labour pool to another, extracting maximum surplus value from each, abandoning each when done.

All of which means, if it still bears repeating,⁷ that the relations of production between capital and labour have changed so fundamentally that labour (in the developed capitalist world) has lost a great deal of its economic clout and, with it, its political clout. And that, in turn, gives a further fillip to technological innovation, and imbues capital with an arrogance of power that it has seldom enjoyed since the era of primitive accumulation. Which is more the reason why it is necessary to at least entertain the notion, anathema to western-centric Marxists, that as 'the centre of gravity of exploitation of labour by capital...has been displaced from the centre of the system to its periphery',⁸ so too the class

struggle might have moved from the developed capitalist countries to the underdeveloped Third World – and there, where capital is at its rawest and most extravagant, the struggle may not be just class but mass.

It is immaterial in such a context whether ‘foreign direct investment is overwhelmingly concentrated in advanced capitalist countries, with capital moving from one such country to another’.⁹ (Why shouldn’t it be – since the return is greater in the skilled, high-technology end of production, and surplus value is greater at the unskilled labour intensive end of production.) The point is that, irrespective of the size of investment, the surplus value that capital makes on the backs of Third World workers (women and children and all) is well-nigh absolute,¹⁰ and casts them into the lower depths of drug-pushing, prostitution and child slavery.

Besides, the ‘conditionalities’ attached to such investment – the abrogation of trade union rights, strong (meaning authoritarian) government, tax concessions, profit repatriation and other financial inducements – spell the further weakening of working-class organisation, the erosion of civil rights and the spread of privatisation.¹¹ Not satisfied, however, with the existing return on its investment, multinational capital, under the aegis of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),¹² is now rail-roading Third World governments into a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), which takes away their right to put any sort of restrictions on foreign investment, however damaging to the national interest.

It is immaterial, too, that, as at the early 1990s, ‘over 80 per cent of world trade was conducted between the “western” members of the OECD’.¹³ The point is that such trade ‘continues the pattern of unequal exchange as a mechanism for the reproduction of global inequalities’.¹⁴ Nor does it matter whether these corporations are called multinational or transnational, another ‘Left’ quibble. The point is that businesses are in the business of government and governments are in the business of businesses and, together, they are killing off whole populations. And, in any case, multinational corporations mutate into transnational corporations as the cancer of globalism spreads.¹⁵ What we should be doing is not arguing the toss, but setting our minds and bending our will to combating them.

To do that, however, we should not be afraid to acknowledge (despite accusations of economic determinism and threats of excommunication) that the technological revolution has given virtual primacy to information as the chief economic resource, freeing capital from the exigencies of labour and allowing it to roam all over the globe (in terms of production, trade, investment, currency speculation) on the back of free-market economics and neo-liberal ideology, with the state as its instrument and democracy its price. Nor should we underestimate the forces arrayed on the side of corporate capital – the state, the market, the polity, neo-liberal ideology – and the degree to which they act in concert. Which is not to say that the whole edifice is not fraught with contradictions, but to say that they have to be discovered anew in their current loci and strengths and

fought accordingly, with different tactics and strategies and forces.

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The state (in the developed countries) is still the seat of national capital but it is now the agent of international capital as well. Both capitals need the intervention of the state to avail themselves of unfettered markets.¹⁶ Within its own national boundaries, the state provides for such an outcome chiefly through the removal of rules and regulations that in any way hinder the free play of market forces, and the privatisation not only of public utilities but of a large part of the infrastructure as well. And this, irrespective of which party is in power – for only the style changes with the government. In Britain, the Tories do it the confrontational, up-front, openly anti-working-class way, as behoves the natural party of capital. Whereas Labour or, rather, New Labour does it through the politics of consensus, persuading a weakened working class that it is in its own best interests to put whatever power it has left into the safe-keeping of the natural party of labour. For such a politics to be viable, however, it must not only appear to occupy the middle ground between capital and labour, but also win over an aspiring middle Britain to its policies and programmes. The point is to look liberal, while calling yourself labour and working for capital – and that way you belong to all of them, to all the people, to Britannia. That's the New Labour way, the Clinton way, the Third Way.¹⁷

What the Tories called privatisation, New Labour calls partnership. Where the Tories had a whole lexicon of market-speak to enumerate their project: purchasers and providers, consumers and customers, New Labour has one: partners. Thus, bringing in Shell, Tate & Lyle, McDonalds to co-fund education; PFIs (private finance initiatives) to build roads, hospitals and schools; Railtrack, Virgin and Stagecoach to run public transport; Securicor, Group 4 and American-UK consortiums to run prisons, and a host of other such New Labour schemes involving the public sector, no longer comes under the rubric of privatisation but partnership.

And it is that sense of partnership, presumably, that elsewhere gets translated into the appointment of uncritical New Labour supporters to critical government positions. So that where the Tories had set up quangos to put their stooges in, New Labour simply has place-men and women, in a more direct sort of privatisation of government.

The politics of consensus also calls for presentation, imaging – of policies, programmes, personnel. It requires that the government sells itself to the people. That, in turn, needs the support of the mass media and an ability to manipulate news so as to present the government in an unflinchingly favourable light. Hence New Labour's cultivation of image-makers like media baron Rupert Murdoch, and the nurturing of myth-makers, spin-doctors, in an aptly named Strategic Communications Unit. Murdoch, in return, makes certain that the government remains friendly to capital and true to its neo-liberal remit.

It is all of a piece – deregulation, privatisation, the move from social welfare to social control, the erosion of civil society and the propagation of neo-liberal ideology, not least through the relations of the market itself – and they all require the intervention of the state to one degree or another. (The result is the polarisation of society into the haves and the have-nots, with the poorest third replicating the Third World in the First.)

It is that same pattern that is being reproduced throughout the world by the imperatives of global capitalism, mostly with the help of western nation states, but gradually transcending them. But where such capitalist penetration is at its crudest and most devastating is in those countries of the Third World which are still trying to get out of the morass of debt and dependency inflicted on them by neo-colonialism. There, not even the governments are their own any more, nor the national bourgeoisies which, in the era of import substitution and nationalisation, were still warding off the intrusion of foreign capital. Now, under the impact of globalisation, the national bourgeoisie has become an organic part of the international bourgeoisie and the government is either ordained and/or kept in situ by western powers to further the interests of transnational capital. And to make those interests concrete, they have set up a whole host of supranational and transnational institutions, organisations and programmes.

Some of these like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) were already there, ostensibly to help developing countries with aid and trade and balance of payments problems, but have since shaped themselves to follow the dictates of capitalist expansion and become the purveyors of globalism. Thus the WB and IMF changed tack in the 1980s, in the middle of a Third World debt crisis, to insist that debtor countries institute Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which would redirect government finances from public spending to debt-servicing – thereby dismantling the public sector and bringing in deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation. ‘State industries were sold off; public services were “contracted out”; development projects “franchised” to private companies; social spending slashed; user charges for basic services introduced or increased; markets “deregulated”’,¹⁸ so paving the way for transnational capital while structuring poverty into the very fabric of Third World societies.

Nor is there an out through trade. For, although GATT was supposed to liberalise trade through the removal of quotas and tariffs among its hundred-odd members, in the event the ‘liberalisation’ was all in one direction: South to North. A number of ‘side agreements’, for instance, ensured that the richer countries retained the right to exclude textiles and agricultural products from the GATT remit, the two areas that affected Third World countries most. Thus a series of Multi-Fibre Agreements allowed the developed countries to impose quotas on the Third World for hundreds of categories of textiles and clothing, extending the range of countries and categories with each such agreement – so removing what ‘for many Third World countries is the first step in the ladder to industrial development, just as it was for Britain’.¹⁹ And in the matter of agricultural

products, prohibitive tariffs imposed on processed goods made sure that (Third World) produce such as oil, fruit, coffee, tea, cotton, etc. went out in its raw state, to be processed by the food corporations in the North and sold back to the South!

These trends in liberalisation, which privileged the North at the expense of the South, were enshrined and carried further in the Uruguay Round of GATT in 1994. Thus, all Third World countries except 'the least developed' (or the most hungry? and therefore 'unworkable') were forbidden to impose import duties on foodstuffs, thereby opening up lucrative new markets for subsidised US and European wheat and killing off locally produced food such as rice, grain, cassava, etc. (along with the local farmer).

Similarly, northern agribusiness and pharmaceutical companies were allowed to patent products and processes based on genetic material derived from Third World crops and wild plants and sell them back to the Third World, while Third World countries were forbidden to develop their own local equivalent of western products on the grounds of technological 'piracy'. For instance, drugs like Zantac, widely used in India for the treatment of ulcers, and produced locally for local use, are now subject to royalties imposed by the corporations holding the patent. It was no accident, then, that the 'agreement' on Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) should have been instigated by the US-based Intellectual Property Coalition (IBM, DuPont, General Motors et al) and European agro-chemical giants (such as Unilever, Hoechst and Ciba-Geigy) – and should include in its remit trademark goods (designer and brand products), copyright goods (artistic material including software) and patent goods (industrial processes and their products).

To make sure that member nations played by GATT Rules 1994 on pain of punitive trade sanctions, a supranational enforcement agency, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), was created. But specific exemptions from the measures imposed by the WTO on all other members were afforded the free trade areas around the dominant capitalist countries: the European Union (EU), the North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum (APEC). GATT, in effect, had, in Alan Freeman's words, 'been transformed from an ineffectual chamber of commerce into a powerful device for restructuring the world market and the commercial and financial interests of the leading powers'²⁰ and, one might add, their principals, the transnational corporations. Continues Freeman, 'the control of trade [the WTO] has emerged from the entrails of the world market to claim its place, alongside financial blackmail [the IMF] and debt-slavery [the WB] as a primary instrument of advanced country domination'.²¹

Soon there is to be an OECD-inspired Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), ostensibly to level the playing field between domestic and foreign investors by preventing national governments from discriminating against foreign companies. But since it is the poorer countries of the South that need foreign investment most – and they are being told that they will not get investment if they do not sign the MAI – it is they who will be the most

vulnerable to the demands of transnational capital. And these would include the waiving of rules that restrict investment in, for example, land, agriculture, natural resources, cultural industries, highly polluting industries and toxic waste dumps. Governments and local authorities would not even be allowed to screen the investment to see whether it would be damaging to the country's environment or its people.²² If, on the other hand, a government or local authority breaks its agreement, it can be sued in an international tribunal of trade experts, working behind closed doors, beyond public scrutiny.²³ In effect, TNCs will have new and astonishing powers over elected authorities.

Talks on the MAI, which have been going on in secret for over three years, have stalled for the moment,²⁴ but, with aid from the richer countries dropping off and the 'conditionalities' imposed by the IMF and WB becoming more burdensome, the poorer nations have little choice but to give in to the MAI and governance by TNCs.

But, then, Third World nation states, born of disorganic colonial capitalism,²⁵ have never been able to call their nations their own, except for brief periods following independence and/or bouts of revolutionary activity.²⁶ For a time, though, they had a choice between state capitalism and market capitalism. Strangely, it was those countries which chose a combination of the two (to add to their own 'family capitalism'), that succeeded in becoming prosperous 'tiger economies', though that prosperity never 'trickled down' to the masses. But even the 'tigers', while standing up to the old style neo-colonialism of the western powers, are unable to withstand the encroachments of transnational capital. If they are to continue with a capitalist system, they, like the rest of the Third World, have no option but to become active collaborators in globalism and the undisguised enemies of their people.

Now the nation cannot call the state its own. Whatever the form of government in the Third World – dictatorship, electoral democracy or some sort of parliamentary authoritarianism – the state is in hock to TNCs and their agencies. There is not one area of a country's state or civic structure that has not been altered to provide for the free play of global capital. The western powers had already paved the way by setting up and/or maintaining Third World regimes which would open up land and labour to foreign capital in deregulated Free Trade Zones (FTZs), the colony within the neo-colony. The IMF and WB followed suit with development programmes that extended deregulation beyond the FTZs to the whole of the labour market and carried privatisation into the very heart of the public sector, so that TNCs or their local satraps not only came to control the public utilities but to determine the social and welfare infrastructure as well. GATT, NAFTA, CARICOM, APEC and a whole array of unequal treaties, ending up in the writing in of that inequality into the rules of the WTO, put the final touches by handing over what was left of a country's natural resources, markets and trade to the TNCs.

Today, there is not even the seedling vestige of an independent economic life. Agriculture has ceded to agribusiness, food production to the production of cash

crops, staple foods like rice to cheap foreign imports like wheat (with biotech firms like Rice Tec Inc. threatening to replace even that with their brand of genetically engineered Basmati rice: Texmati). Education, the staple diet of Third World countries' economic and social mobility, has been priced out of the reach of the poor to produce an elite which owes allegiance not to its own people but to 'opportunities in the West'. The farmers have no land, the workers have no work, the young have no future, the people have no food. The state belongs to the rich, the rich belong to international capital, the intelligentsia aspire to both. Only religion offers hope; only rebellion, release. Hence the insurrection when it comes is not class but mass, sometimes religious, sometimes secular, often both, but always against the state and its imperial masters.

But there is no socialist ideology to give it direction, no organic intellectuals to plan its strategies. Hence the rebellions in Zaire, Indonesia, Nigeria end up by bringing back another version of the same old regimes – the second time as farce. And religion, which began as 'the sigh of the oppressed', now takes on the force of fundamentalist ideology.

Globalisation, in sum, throws up its own contradictions or, rather, it arranges old contradictions differently,²⁷ and moves the site of struggle against capital from the economic to the political – from the fight against capital and, therefore, the state, to the fight against the state and, therefore, capital, or, rather, the state-in-capital. So that even the economic struggles of the working class have now to be fought on the political terrain: the fight for the right to fight for wages antedates the fight for wages. For the free market destroys workers' rights, suppresses civil liberties and neuters democracy till all that is left is the vote. It dismantles the public sector, privatises the infrastructure and determines social need. It free-floats the currency and turns money itself into a commodity subject to speculation, so influencing fiscal policy. It controls inflation at the cost of employment. It creates immense prosperity at the cost of untold poverty. It violates the earth, contaminates the air and turns even water to profit. And it throws up a political culture based on greed and self-aggrandisement and sycophancy, reducing personal relationships to a cash nexus (conducted in the language of the bazaar) even as it elevates consumerism to the height of Cartesian philosophy: 'I shop, therefore I am'. A free market presages an unfree people.

For its part, the state, by refusing to interfere with market forces (as in the developed countries) or being unable to do so (as in the developing countries) gives up all pretence of ameliorating the excesses of capital and becomes its accomplice instead. The state now represents capital and nothing else. But as capital goes transnational and the market global, the relationship of the state to capital becomes more varied: sometimes partner (of national capital) sometimes agent (of multinational corporations), but increasingly a tool (of transnational corporations) – not transparently so, but through the international agencies such as the EU, APEC, G7, NAFTA, CARICOM, GATT, WTO, etc. which it helps to set up, in some small surrender of sovereignty, to set capital free.

All of which requires governments that do not change basic free market policy, whatever their hue. And government not so much by consent²⁸ as by consensus (if not coercion). Consent is given, consensus manufactured. Consent engages the whole electorate, consensus involves only a majority. Consent politicises, consensus dumbs-down. And coercion is reserved for that third of society that Information Capitalism and the market have consigned to the underclass as surplus to needs.²⁹ Governments owe their position and their power not to the voters but to media moguls, business conglomerates, owners of the means of communication who massage the votes and manipulate the voters.³⁰ Those who own the media own the votes that 'own' the government. The polity is a reflection of the market.

Hence, there is a whole plethora of struggles going on both in the North and the South which are not necessarily working-class struggles against capital as such, but resistances to the political project of the global market – call it neo-liberalism if you like – as it impacts on people's lives and livelihoods. In the developed countries, political power is diffused and mediated, and dissidence centres around specific issues. Resistance, therefore, takes on the form of protests and demonstrations and direct action politics – over the opening of a motorway through the green belt, say, or the closing of a local hospital or the destruction of civic amenities by property speculators or the growing of genetically-modified crops by food speculators. Although, at the outset, such resistances tend to be ad hoc, sporadic and disconnected, they form the basis of the alliances and larger resistances that follow – as, for instance, over the poll tax when thousands of people from diverse campaigns found common cause against an unjust tax and marched through London – and had the tax rescinded, thereby removing a central plank of the Thatcherite project. And as transnational corporations continue under New Labour, too, to integrate vertically and horizontally and every which way into a privatised network of power, direct action campaigns are themselves integrating issues and becoming international – as, for instance, in the battle against Shell by ecological groups over the North Sea and the (anti-colonial) Ogoni people in Nigeria.

In the Third World, political power is concentrated in the hands of a few and is naked, and dissidence solidifies around basic needs. Hence, resistances in the periphery take the form of spontaneous uprisings and/or mass rebellions spurred on by indigenous movements sometimes, and sometimes by peasant and worker struggles.³¹ But, as in the North, these struggles too tend to develop an international dimension, if still only at the level of pressure groups and conferences and the occasional demonstration – as when at the 1998 Ministerial Conference of GATT/WTO in Geneva, attended by Clinton, Blair and Castro among others, an estimated 10,000 demonstrators from various parts of the world took to the streets under the banner of People's Global Action to denounce free trade and liberalisation.³² At the same time, elsewhere in Geneva, an alternative conference of NGOs from Asia, Africa and Latin America (but not the North) – entitled People's Global Action Against Free Trade and the World Trade

Organisation, and convened by such groups as Movimento Sem Terra in Brazil, the Karnataka State Farmers' Association of India, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, Nigeria, the Peasant Movement of the Philippines, the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores, Nicaragua and the Indigenous Women's Network based in North America and the Pacific – put out a manifesto calling for direct confrontation with TNCs and an end to globalisation.³³

As yet, though, these struggles, whether in the First World or the Third, do not, like those of the industrial working class, take on capitalism head-on. But then, the working class has direct, first-hand experience of capital in the workplace, and sees it naked and unadorned. Increasingly, though, capital comes mediated through the market, and what people react to is the experience of the market as it impacts, differentially, on their lives. But because a pervasive market pervades all aspects of life – economic, political, social, cultural, ecological – it also tends to bring together the issues thrown up by them. People do not compartmentalise themselves into economic, social, ecological, etc. beings. And the market, by reducing all human activity to the binary of buying and selling, writes in, and at once, economic exploitation, cultural hegemony and political consensus – and throws up a value system which further enhances it. Everything and everyone has a price, the individual is more important than society (indeed, 'there is no such thing as society'), businessmen know what people really need and are better fitted to run things like public utilities, schools, housing, etc. (that is why they are paid more), unemployment is the waste product of an efficient economy, lucre is no longer even marginally filthy but the soul of 'man' under capitalism.

Hence, as the struggles against the market in its various guises grow and come together and fall apart and rise again in different configurations, the consciousness also grows that capitalism is the moving force behind it all, and the market only the expression of capital in its globalist epoch. But to make that consciousness material and direct it against capital, we need a socialism that speaks to it in terms of globalisation and the free market experience and not just in terms of the factory and working-class struggle. We need a socialism that, in proclaiming 'the subordination of the economy to society' (as opposed to the market philosophy which subordinates society to the economy), throws up a political culture that reverses the values of the market and establishes instead the worth and dignity of human life. We need a socialism that puts politics in command.

And we need organic intellectuals who will 'forge the links between "theory" and "ideology", creating a two-way passage between political analysis and popular experience'.³⁴ We need an insurgent intelligentsia in the engine rooms of Information Capitalism. We need to 'wrest a utopia from technology'.³⁵

References

I owe not a little to my discussions with Neil Lazarus.

1 I refer, of course, to what remains of the Marxist Left. There is no other Left worth speaking of.

2 See Ellen Meiksins Wood, William Tabb et al. in *Monthly Review* (Vol. 48, no. 3, 1996; Vol. 48, no. 9, 1997; Vol. 49, no. 2, 1997; Vol. 49, no. 3, 1997; Vol. 49, no. 8, 1998).

3 Ramin Ramtin, 'A Note on Automation and Alienation' in *Cutting Edge: Technology, Information, Capitalism and Social Revolution*, edited by Jim Davis et al. (London, Verso, 1997).

4 Ramin Ramtin, *Capitalism and Automation* (London, Pluto, 1991).

5 Harry Braverman, 'Two Comments', in *Technology, the Labor Process and the Working Class* (Monthly Review Special, Vol. 28, no. 3, 1976).

6 I have been accused of technological determinism by Ellen Meiksins Wood (*Monthly Review*, Vol. 48, no. 9, 1997) for saying that if 'the handmill gives you society with the feudal lord and the steam-mill gives you society with the industrial capitalist', the microchip gives you society with the global capitalist. But I was no more technologically determinist than Marx and, if his was an aphorism, as Braverman says, I was only bringing it up to date – and aphorisms boast no determinacy.

7 See A. Sivanandan, 'Imperialism in the Silicon Age' in *Monthly Review* (Vol. 32, no. 3, 1980); 'New Circuits of Imperialism' in *Communities of Resistance* (London, Verso, 1990) and 'Heresies and Prophecies: the social and political fallout of the technological revolution' in *Cutting Edge*, op. cit.

8 Samir Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development* (New York, Monthly Review, 1977). Note that this point was made by Amin, myself and other Third World analysts over twenty years ago.

9 Ellen Meiksins Wood, 'Labour, the state and class struggle' in *Monthly Review* (Vol. 49, no. 3, 1997).

10 According to Ernst and Young, workers in Vietnam making shoes for Nike are paid an average US\$45 for working 267 hours, which is around 17c. an hour. (Ernst and Young, report for Nike, 1997, <http://www.corpwatch.org/>). According to Martin and Schumann, Siemens in Malaysia keeps its imported Indonesian women workers locked up at night in the factory's own hostel. In Indonesia, two women trade-unionists were killed and their mutilated bodies dumped on the rubbish tip of the factories where they had tried to organise a strike. (See Hans-Peter Martin and Harald Schumann, *The Global Trap* (London, Zed, 1997)).

11 'Something like 20 to 30 per cent of foreign investment in the third world in recent years', observes Magdoff, 'has been used to buy up private infrastructures.' (See *Monthly Review*, Vol. 49, no. 8, 1998).

12 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is made up of twenty-nine of the world's richest countries in which 477 of the world's largest corporations are based.

13 Barrie Axford, *The Global System: economics, politics and culture* (Oxford, Polity, 1995).

14 Also Barrie Axford – in the same paragraph!

15 UNCTAD reports that in 1995 there were some 40,000 companies with headquarters in more than three countries and that two-thirds of world trade was carried out by transnational corporations. (UNCTAD, *World Investment Report 1995* (New York, 1995)).

'The share of world GDP controlled by TNCs has grown from 17 per cent in the mid-'60s to 24 per cent in 1984 and almost 33 per cent in 1995...Continuous mergers and take-overs have created a situation in which almost every sector of the global economy is controlled by a handful of TNCs, the most recent being the services and pharmaceuticals sectors.' (Olivier Hoedeman et al, 'MAIgalomania: the new corporate agenda', *The Ecologist* (Vol. 28, no. 3, May/June 1998)).

16 There are, in fact, four inter-related markets – in goods, capital, labour and currency. See Bertell Ollman, 'Market mystification in capitalist and market socialist societies' in Bertell Ollman, ed., *Market Socialism* (London, Routledge, 1998).

17 'This dynamic idea-based global economy offers the possibility of lifting billions of people into a world-wide middle class.' Bill Clinton. Speech to the World Trade Organisation, 18 May 1998, *Guardian* (20 May 1998).

A Third Way ideology conference is to be launched by Blair and Clinton in New York on 21 September 1998, *Guardian* (14 August 1998).

18 The CornerHouse, *The Myth of the Minimalist State* (Briefing 5, March 1998).

19 Kevin Watkins, 'GATT and the Third World: fixing the rules' in *The New Conquistadors (Race & Class*, Vol. 34, no. 1, 1992).

20 Alan Freeman 'GATT and the World Trade Organisation', *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* (No. 59, Spring 1998).

21 Ibid.

22 See *World Development Movement, A Dangerous Leap in the Dark: implications of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment* (Briefing Paper, November 1997).

23 Olivier Hoedeman, op. cit.

24 Stalled not only because of the fight being put up by the NGOs, but also because the rich countries may not get the exemptions they want if they too are not to be overrun by transnational corporations. Hence the proposal to move MAI negotiations to the more established venue of the WTO.

25 See A. Sivanandan, *Imperialism in the Silicon Age*, op. cit.

26 'We've become a state without a country', was how a Mozambican radical put it. Quoted in Victoria Brittain, 'Africa: a political audit' in *The New Conquistadors*, op. cit.

27 For the market, as Bertell Ollman shows, overlays the relations of production with the relations of consumption. (Ollman, op. cit.)

28 Consent is here used in its dictionary definition and not in its Gramscian sense – since the market is today the prime site of cultural hegemony.

29 Will Hutton calls it 'the thirty, thirty, forty society' where thirty per cent are 'the absolutely disadvantaged'. Will Hutton, *The State We're In* (London, Cape, 1995).

30 Proportional representation is being held out as a countervailing force. But although PR does give minority parties a voice, it does not in the outcome produce radical policies, only compromises, thereby writing consensus into the 'constitution'.

31 In India recently, farmers burnt imported foodstuffs in protest against an increase in food imports. John Madeley, *Globalisation under attack...or not* (London, Panos, 30 April 1998).

32 Martin Khor, *WTO party marred by anti-globalisation protests* (Malaysia, Third World Network Features, 1998).

33 John Madeley, op. cit.

34 Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (London, Verso, 1991). See also A.Sivanandan, 'La trahison des clercs', *New Statesman* (14 July 1995).

35 Peter Glotz quoted in André Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason* (London, Verso, 1989)