

# SAYING NO TO CAPITALISM AT THE MILLENNIUM

George Ross

Saying No to capitalism has traditionally been the point of departure for socialist movements – including social democracy and the universe of groups to its left, 'the Left' of this essay. Doing so credibly has involved connecting fundamental critique of the capitalist system with an alternative vision of socialism. The act of saying No to capitalism has been historically and materially conditioned, varying with the stage of capitalism. Since World War II capitalism has changed tremendously, moving from the post-war boom to today's crisis and reconfiguration. In each moment of this evolution the **Left** has had to reconsider its ideas and practices. At present, the Left's ability to say No is in crisis. The circumstances of the Left's existence have changed dramatically, as have the questions the Left must answer. This essay tries to analyze the sources and nature of this crisis and the opportunities that it presents.

## *I The Odd Couple – The Socialist Left and Social Democracy in the Post-War Boom*

... a 'reformist' strategy, if it is taken seriously and pursued to its necessary conclusion, must lead to a vast extension of democratic participation in all areas of civic life – amounting to a very considerable transformation of the character of the state and of existing bourgeois democratic forms.

Ralph Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*

The centre piece of modern socialist politics has been a multiform discourse constructed over a century of struggle. The framework of this discourse is a class analytical map of capitalism privileging the position and agency of workers. The immediate purpose of socialist politics was to limit the harshness of capitalism. Its deeper purpose was to strengthen workers' commitment to basic change, while also gathering support from groups outside the working class. The direction of such change was to be towards socialism, defined fluidly as what capitalism was not and implying drastic limitations on the scope of the market, if not its total elimination, plus the extension of full democratic decision-making into those areas

## GEORGE ROSS

where capitalism, even in its liberal democratic political formulations, did not allow: matters of economic allocation, the nature of the workplace and the distribution of life-chances through unequal advantages granted by inheritance and unfair distribution of opportunities.

More specifically, however, the complicated task of saying No to capitalism depended upon what capitalism actually was at any particular moment. The political economy of post-war capitalism thus established the logics that controlled the **behaviours** of both Left and social democracy in the post-war boom and thereafter. Social democracy remained the dominant branch of the broader socialist movement in the period, and its growing integration into this system made it particularly vulnerable to Left critique. The act of saying No to capitalism from the mid-1940s through the end of the post-war boom was thus overdetermined by symbiotic relationships between the Left and the social democrats. For the Left, criticizing social democracy became the most important focus of its critique of capitalism itself.

### *Post-War Social Democracy*

The nature of social democracy in capitalism's Cold War years is well understood. Almost all social democratic movements converted to a strategy of promoting Keynesian welfare states. This required, first of all, nested compromises between labour and monopoly capital aimed at conciliating capital's competitiveness and profit with limited redistribution and democratization. Minor shifts of income and wealth through taxation were small, if always contested, prices for capital to pay. New deals in the workplace gave higher wages and greater employment security to some workers in exchange for quiescence about technological change. Next, public policy was set to stimulate demand to generate near-to-full employment, moderate the business cycle and allow mass production capitalism to tap a predictable and growing consumer market. The expansion of social programmes also moderated capitalism's otherwise harsh allocation of misfortunes while providing a degree of counter-cyclic income stability. Built into all this was often some form of neo- or **meso**-corporatist collaboration between trade unions (tied to social democrats in one way or another), capital and the state to promote price stability, the Achilles heel of attempts to manage demand.

The general deal was productivist: economic growth was the key to everything else. Facilitating, fine-tuning and sharing the fruits of this growth were the central policy **matters**. At the heart of things was the expansion of Fordist consumer durable and producer goods corporations employing large numbers of semi-skilled manufacturing workers. The major beneficiaries, besides monopoly capital, were unionized workers

who gained greater employment security, improving consumerist living standards and optimistic prospects for the immediate future in exchange for collaboration in productivity growth. Male blue collar workers were the base of social democracy electorally, organizationally and often financially. The power of this base and the success of the system enticed other social groups, particularly the growing public sector new middle strata, into political alliance.

There were great national variations in the model. In Northern Europe the elements were most fully combined. In Sweden, export-oriented large corporations, high levels of unionization and an intelligent social democratic party allowed innovations to come earlier and go further.<sup>7</sup> In the UK, decentralized trade unionism with considerable power over the evolution of the Labour party produced incomplete reformism and inability to sustain effective neo-corporatism. In Germany, **sectoral** meso-corporatism brought only partial social democratization. In Latin European countries, where social democratic hegemony was contested by strong Communist movements, developments were different, even though the outlines of the social democratic post-war compromise inevitably seeped in, as they did in North America, despite the absence of serious social democratic movements.

During the glory days of post-war compromise the nation state could hope to regulate national economic flows, controlling capital movements, exchange rates, fiscal policies and the strength of demand. A changing capitalist state became a central agent in the accumulation process, moving tax revenues and national savings and using state agencies to promote economic policy goals. Many important social choices, including extensive efforts to structure and 'frame' the market itself, could be made through political processes, most often centralized at national state level. The political struggle of organized groups, including those of workers, could influence these processes, generating a range of 'public goods.'

There was an international price to be paid for social democratic success. The Bretton Woods monetary and financial regimes which coordinated international trade were run by the Americans. These regimes, which facilitated 'good' national trade, monetary and fiscal policies and punished bad ones (high inflation, excessive deficits), policed reformist governments to keep them within acceptable limits. The Americans also used their power to promote ever-broadening free trade. NATO and its complex security arrangements were the final major pillar of American domination. The post-war boom thus became largely dependent upon and incorporated within the Cold War, with social democrats enlisted on the American side.

### *The Left's Tasks During the Post-War Boom*

In these nested national and international contexts the general tasks of the Left seemed clear. First, it was necessary to expose the shortcomings of social democracy. The message was that social democracy, despite vague invocations of socialist utopianism, was not socialist at all. Claims that post-war arrangements were steps towards a different, non-capitalist alternative were hollow. At best, social democracy was tinkering with a capitalist order that otherwise seemed destined to go from strength to strength. The Left could thus warn that social democracy was unlikely to succeed at democratizing capitalism or even at changing it very much. Capital constrained its options, and these options, in turn, controlled the bulk of the workers' movements. In this context, the Left had to keep the flame of socialism alive until illusions of social democratic success had been shattered. 'Saying No to capitalism' was a plausible Left endeavour at this point because social democracy continued to claim, in transparently false ways, that it was doing the same thing.

These critical tasks were complicated by the divisions within the Left. The Left had always been populated by argumentative intellectuals and activists with a passion for doctrine and the rhetorical voluntarism that small group life can nurture. In this post-war period democratic Socialists, Marxist-Leninists, anarchists, various 'western Marxists' and the warring tribes of Trotskyism were quite capable, on their own, of a high level of cacophony. In addition, since Communist parties were also part of this Left, the Soviet model, with its vanguardist substitutism and denial of democratic rights, became a more important factor in Left discussion than it should have been. The Soviet model was also the cause of incessant and often destructive internecine divisions between pro-Soviets and **anti-Soviets**, like the Trotskyist movement, within the Left. It also erected additional barriers to communication with parts of social democracy's base.

The post-war boom period was not continuous and the life of the **Left-social democrat** 'odd couple' was divisible into two moments. During the first, from the late 1940s into the early **1960s**, social democracy struck its new deals with capital, and the post-war consumerist boom gathered steam. The second, stretching into the **1970s**, saw the explosion of many of the contradictions of this new capitalism and a renewal of Left hope. The valence of the relationship between the Left and social democracy was different during each.

The first of the Left's tasks as the post-war boom took hold was to debunk the intellectual claims **made** for the new capitalism, many from social democracy. Beginning in the 1950s there was an onslaught from progressive 'social science' drawing all manner of conclusions about capitalist economic, social and political success. Among major claims

were that the 'economic problem had been solved' (Galbraith) and that solutions to major distributive problems were thereby at hand. It was also announced that the monopoly corporation had become 'soulful.' No longer a profit maximizer, it was instead a trustee of the public interest. Then a panoply of arguments declared the end of class as the central social cleavage in parliamentary democratic systems, in ideology and in the workplace. Perhaps the most articulate summary of most of these arguments came in Anthony Crosland's tour de force, *The Future of Socialism*, the most prophetic recasting of social democratic tenets in English. Crosland saw the post-war boom as an indicator that capital had found the secret of perpetual expansion, that workers were declining in importance as the white collar middle class grew and that new, and no longer socialisant, forms of redistributive politics could become social democracy's programme. Crosland was clear in ways that official social democratic positions were not. To him saying No to capitalism was no longer a useful thing for social democrats to do.

In this context the Left persistently denied these extravagant claims? However, it was less successful at combining such denial with analyses of what precisely was new in the new capitalism. Indeed, Left intellectuals and activists, with notable exceptions, became so engaged in exposing the fact that capitalism still had nefarious consequences, that exploitation continued, that inequalities were harsh and that class remained important that they neglected to explore fully the logics of the changes that had occurred. It was perhaps natural, when memories of the Great Depression, Fascism and World War II were so fresh, to write off changing post-war economic and social circumstances as temporary aberrations before the return of the old system. The Left was nonetheless late in acknowledging the very real modifications in class structure and the sociology of politics which was occurring.<sup>4</sup>

The Left's analyses of the international politics of the Cold War, nuclear threat and decolonization were much more robust. New declensions of the Marxist theory of imperialism were of enormous help in illuminating events and persuasive enough to penetrate broader political and intellectual circles. Thus they provided meaning and purpose to peace movement activities and labour action. The period was contradictory, however. Because of the importance of the Soviet experience in Left discourse the Cold War became a manichaeian affair in which a logic of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' textured Left appreciations. The power of Communist parties within Left debate contributed to this. Often there were problems distinguishing socialist internationalism from the great power manoeuvrings of the USSR. It also fed an unfortunate tendency to accept the self-definitions of Third World socialist and liberation movements at face value. Non-Communist Leftists were not as sharply critical on fundamental issues of

## GEORGE ROSS

human and democratic rights as they might have ~~been~~.<sup>1</sup>

Important implications for action followed from the Left's positions. Thus it supported militant workers' movements and urged them to resist the sirens of neo-corporatism. It denounced many of the policy lines chosen by the social democrats. It defended peace, denounced the arms race and supported anti-imperialist struggle. These were considerable accomplishments. Resisting 'happy days' rhetoric and uncovering the logics of international policies were in themselves important ways of saying No to capitalism, but the Left was least successful in elucidating the socialist alternative. The outlines of a socialist future were much less well portrayed than the substance of social democratic betrayal.

The second moment, which began in the **1960s**, brought to be the fore many of the contradictions upon which the post-war boom had been built. The period revealed the absence of any 'invisible' hand stabilising the various neo-, **meso-** and pseudo- **corporatisms** by which relationships between labour, capital and the state had come to be structured. In many places relatively full employment led workers to push for higher income to sustain the consumerist lifestyle which they had been encouraged to adopt. Where workers and their allies were powerful politically, they also demanded substantial expansion of social protection and welfare state programmes. And where growth involved industrial restructuring, as it did in most European economies, strong working class movements used their power to protect themselves. Finally, restructuring and expansion drew new social groups into the labour force who often rebelled against intensifying Fordist work disciplines.

These contradictions were unsettling. Governments faced increasing levels of workplace struggle and growing inflationary pressure. Inflation threatened international trade positions, prompting devaluations or stop-go policies which stimulated more problems and further destabilized the international trading system. The deeper trends were more ominous. The social-democratic deal with monopoly capital depended upon national insulation from international economic settings which was thinning because the international dimensions of the post-war boom were changing. The deterioration of **US** economic power in the face of successful catchup strategies of European and Japanese capitalisms undercut American capacities to sustain the Bretton Woods financial and monetary system. A combination of new competition in markets that the **US** had earlier dominated, the decline of **US** trade advantage, the rise of **US** transnational corporations and the costs of American military expenditures abroad changed the logics of American monetary hegemony. Earlier the **US** had underwritten an international monetary and financial order that it perceived to be in its medium-term interests. Henceforth it would exploit the vulnerability of others to compensate for its own problems. These logics led to

the abandonment of gold standard and the Bretton Woods system by the Americans in the earlier 1970s.

These trends were hugely compounded by the Vietnam War. The costs of the war for the American treasury, the Johnson administration's unwillingness to raise taxes plus demand-side pressures on international markets created by the war injected substantial new inflationary trends into world capitalism. Exporting the costs of war and inflation accentuated already existing trends towards inflation and domestic distributive conflict. Quite as important, Vietnam demonstrated that there were political limits to US Cold War foreign policy.

All this was striking confirmation of Left warnings about the ultimate instability of the post-war order, but it was only the beginning. The 1960s saw a widespread reawakening of social protest as a way of doing politics. The Vietnam War became the centre of a transnational movement that shook the American empire to its core. Workers mobilized and struck with unprecedented strength, often overwhelming employer and government efforts to contain them. Such was the case in the UK during the late 1960s shop-stewards movements (under a Labour government), in France in 1968, in Italy's 'hot autumn' of 1969 and, in less spectacular ways, in other places (including the US). Student mobilizations, often occurring as complements to worker action, were equally spectacular and very often announced in strong Left vocabularies, a discursive success of great comfort to the **Left**.<sup>6</sup>

Class conflict had 'returned,' class was clearly an essential dividing line and younger generations of intellectuals and the proliferating new middle strata were lining up alongside workers. The power of this return of **class**-oriented protest not only confirmed the Left's positions and projected the Left into much greater prominence in progressive political discussions. It also had a profound effect on social democracy, reinvigorating ideas about planning and redistribution that had been neglected or abandoned. The Left thereby gained new power in the British Labour Party, the French Left unified tactically in 1972 around the most stringent left programme that anyone had seen in decades, Italians theorized and practised the beginnings of a 'historic compromise' and a Spanish Left steeled by decades of anti-Fascist struggle prepared for a new era. The Swedish social democrats decided to push their 'third way' further to the Left through greater industrial democracy and the socialization of profit through wage-earner funds. Even in areas which had weak or non-existent social democratic formations (like Canada and the US) there was a distinct new reformist tinge.

The late 1960s and early 1970s **looked** to be a critical point when the symbiosis between social democracy and the Left might change its nature. Long-standing Left arguments were taken more seriously. Perhaps the most interesting dimension of this was the rapid return of **socialisant** and

Marxist intellectual and political discourse. There were many examples of Left success in academic debates – a good index of discursive change – in economics, sociology and political science, although nowhere greater than in new efforts to conceptualize the capitalist state. Here distinguished Left contributions intervened to raise a whole new set of issues about the relationships between economic dynamics, social forces and the use of state power in ways that had direct political implications?

At this time the Left shifted its discussion towards transcending capitalism and defining a democratic socialist order. The French Communists abandoned their *miserabiliste* traditionalism and developed a reformist version of State Monopoly Capitalism theory positing a democratic transition to socialism, for example. The Italian and Spanish Left developed their Eurocommunist visions. Convincing new ideas came from the independent Left, too.<sup>8</sup> Common to all participants in the debate was a conviction that a strategy of 'revolutionary reformism' was conceivable. In such a strategy progressive forces would first establish beachheads in the capitalist state through political struggle, defined largely to include articulated mobilizational and electoral activities. With careful forethought these beachheads, rather than forestalling further changes (as social democratic reformism did), could be used to empower popular forces further in their struggle for further reform. The underlying logic in the strategy was to target and unleash ever-expanding processes of democratization. 'De-capitalizing' the capitalist state, piece by piece, could create a snowball of change that would lead to the transcendence of capitalism.

## *II The Odd Couple Divorces: New Social Democracy and the Implosion of the Left*

In recent years, it is the very notion of socialism as a comprehensive reorganization of the social order which has come under fire, often from people who have remained more or less committed to the progressive side of politics. Each in its own way, post-Marxism, postmodernism, post-structuralism and related currents of thought, has sewed, whatever the intentions of its protagonists, to strengthen the recoil from general notions of human emancipation, particularly Marxism

Ralph Miliband, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*<sup>9</sup>

Almost as quickly as it had begun, the post-war boom ended. By the early 1980s it was clear that hopes for 'exiting the crisis from the Left' had been dashed. Indeed, as more farsighted advocates of revolutionary reformism had anticipated, Left failure to seize the occasion allowed capitalism to exit crisis from the Right. The economic and political circumstances that ensued pushed social democracy towards renunciation of any reference to socialism. Social democracy's shift logically implied the break up of its symbiotic coupling with the Left.

### ***New Capitalism***

The virtuous cycle of post-war economic growth had ended by the mid-1970s. In fact, capitalism was in transition to increased internationalization in a chaos of oil shocks, stagflation, increased competition, **deindustrialization** in traditional sectors, low investment, monetary chaos, low productivity growth and rising unemployment. The new dynamics of accumulation had devastating effects. National level Keynesian welfare states and social democratic policies no longer functioned. Globalization, in particular of the movement of capital, helped reverse trends towards political regulation and brought a decisive shift towards the 'marketization' of decision-making, away from conscious political choice. Moreover, the nature and content of dramatically reduced state activity changed. In the new context, the state became a mediator between internationalized capitalist economic flows over which it had declining **control**.<sup>10</sup> Conscious political intervention did not disappear, of course, but it refocused, in 'supply-side' ways, on the promotion of international competitiveness for each country's 'own' companies.

The transition was devastating for the working class. As capital ranged over the entire planet, labour markets became global. However, working classes remained national, at least in terms of collective identity. Simultaneously the longer term restructuring of production and expansion of the service sector led to massive development of new middle strata and a striking feminization of the labour force. The changes further undercut the power of many, if not most, union movements. High unemployment, 'flexibilization,' and changing labour-market structures had terrible effects. In Europe, official unemployment figures of about 10% masked much higher real levels; there was an explosion of 'junk jobs' and other forms of precarious employment. It became customary to speak of a 'two-thirds, one third society' in which the bottom third was substantially excluded.<sup>11</sup> The 'contingent worker' appeared. Neo-corporatist arrangements, the backbone of post-war social democratic regulation, were dismantled, unions' membership declined and their efforts at mobilization became more **difficult**.<sup>12</sup>

Industrial restructuring within specific advanced capitalist societies had its own decomposing effects on the traditional bases of social democracy.<sup>13</sup> The supply-side outlook of firms and governments brought mechanisms and techniques to seduce and prod labour to focus more on life at firm level than on national matters. Collective bargaining was decentralized towards the firm, for example, while various organizational efforts to create **firm-oriented** worker consciousness – work-teams, quality circles, official works' councils, expression groups, merit-based individualized salary scales, and/or simple propaganda barrages – were **generalized**.<sup>14</sup> One consequence of such decentralizing tendencies was that the focus of

## GEORGE ROSS

workers' 'consciousness' became less national and more localized or regionalized.

### *New Social Democracy*

By the 1980s the response of social democracy to these changes had taken a 'post-workerist' **form**.<sup>15</sup> Faced with the economic rebalancing of national and international the emerging social democratic project gave increasing priority to the regeneration of national economic capacities in the face of a rapidly shifting and threatening international economic environment. In part this involved 'deregulating' – minimizing various national rigidities and market imperfections to encourage capital to adapt and innovate rapidly. These measures were almost always accompanied by monetarist macroeconomic policies. The coming of costly high unemployment helped to increase running budgetary deficits, despite the new neo-liberalism of macroeconomic policies, and this led to constant pressure to squeeze down welfare state expenditures.

Rather than abandoning state intervention the new social democrats reconfigured it. The political levers which remained available to national governments were converted to a quest for 'competitiveness.' The state should quit shaping and reshaping economic sectors and markets and turn to fostering environments in which firms, henceforth the key actors for national destinies, made decisions to enhance their international competitive positions. The interventionist and *dirigiste* state had to be dismantled through privatizations and the 'marketization' of areas which had earlier been considered public services **and/or** 'natural monopolies' – transport systems, energy and telecommunications networks, post office etc. This involved ending arrangements protecting firms against the cold winds of the international market. It also meant extensive state investment in research and development and targeted educational spending to upgrade human capital.

This complex set of changes had an important impact on the way **new-style** social democracy actually *did* politics. New social democratic movements were increasingly dominated by a caste of policy intellectuals and high administrators who promised that their particular national capitalism would be better managed and coordinated, more rational and successful when central political tasks were given to people like themselves. They were also resolutely 'modernist' in an economic sense, promising the kind of state-of-the-art, 'international best practice' capitalism which, they argued, narrowly self-interested capitalists and a political Right tied to conservative **social** interests were unable to produce. But they claimed to be modernists 'with a heart,' concerned with preserving those aspects of the national welfare state which were consistent with economic constraints and promised new 'flexible' social

programmes to help specific groups most directly threatened by rapid economic **restructuring**.<sup>16</sup> In most places this claim appealed to populations who did not approve of dismantling the welfare state. These claims combined into a package which contrasted strongly with earlier social democracy. If earlier appeals had enjoined class collaboration to promote capitalist profits that might then be redistributed into high wages and collective goods, new appeals were for general social cooperation and solidarity in a national crusade for success in the international market.

The new social democracy was thus vastly less workerist and **class-**oriented than its predecessor, seeking power not by representing a class and its organizations but by attracting votes from those constituencies who desired to civilize and humanize capitalism. Political scientists used to portray social democracy as anchored on a workerist left but dragged towards 'catch all' politics by the logic of electoral competition. The new social democracy, in contrast, began slightly on the reformist side of the political centre and was a 'catch-all' operation from the outset, with workers simply one constituency among others. Finally, its political strategies and tactics were driven by modern electoralism: polls, advertising, television, focus on personalities, etc.

For some time in the 1980s the best examples of the new socialism were found in Latin Europe. France was most revealing. The French socialists brought with them a radical reformist programme of nationalizations, planning, redistribution and measures to strengthen labour when they won elections in 1981. After a brief eighteen months and a very difficult introduction to the realities of globalizing capitalism they completely shifted gears. Short-term austerity programmes led to efforts to restructure French industry. Public sector firms led the way to rapid labour shedding and rising unemployment. Policies were introduced to shift the share of wages in national income to profit, encourage the stock market and pursue a resolute monetarism, all in the interest of establishing new conditions to compete in Europe and internationally."

The Spanish socialists pursued a similar path, if anything much more vigorously. In power beginning in 1982 they opened up their economy to the harsh winds of the European Community and dismantled the old 'rust belt' industries where Spanish labour's base largely resided and which even **Franco** had been afraid to touch. They too turned towards a harsh monetarism and invited capital to seek profit by whatever means. Labour was marginalized and, on occasion, beaten back during **strikes**.<sup>18</sup> Spain's growth levels rose, but official unemployment rates climbed to 20%. For socialist elites, the idealism of opposition to Francoism became a **hard-**nosed managerial Europeanism, cloaked in the argument that the new policies were the unavoidable route to consolidating Spanish democracy. Since the socialists' opponents were tainted by direct filiation with the

authoritarian old regime, a decade of electoral success ensued. The PSOE had even more space to reconfigure its approaches than the French had, and made no bones about the personalism and electoralism of their political operations."

Many purist analysts initially doubted the exemplarity of these Latin European experiences. After all, none of the Latin socialist parties had really emerged from the earlier social democracy, they had never managed a Keynesian welfare state during the post-war boom, and none had ever had strong links with an organized working class and experience with neo-corporatist practices. The sinuous evolution of the British Labour Party was less dramatic, but its conclusion in the **Kinnock**, Smith and Blair leaderships confirmed the general trend.<sup>20</sup> The fate of Swedish social democracy, the last best hope of genuine social democrats, demonstrated the breadth of the pattern.<sup>21</sup> By the later 1980s the famous Swedish 'third way' had begun to move to Latin rhythms. Large multinationals, for long happy with an export-led strategy based on production in Sweden itself, began to relocate off-shore. They also took to attacking neo-corporatism through the dismantling of 'solidaristic wage bargaining.'<sup>22</sup> At the same time rapidly rising budget deficits and inflation levels led a social democratic government to take decisive steps to austerity, dismantling neo-corporatism, welfare state cutbacks and rising unemployment. By the mid **1990s**, with the change still far from completed, Sweden's unemployment rate was at the European average of **10%**, its budget deficits huge, and it faced gigantic new constraints as a new member of the European **Union**.<sup>23</sup>

### *Left Crisis, Left Opportunity?*

The lip-service allegiance of post-war social democracy to a general socialist discourse had produced the symbiotic coupling of Left and social democracy after 1945. Today's social democracy has abandoned discourses of class conflict constructed around the primacy of workers and their organizations, statist and *dirigiste* policy programmes (including efforts to create welfare state programmes), redistributive economic policies and even vague commitments to transcending capitalism towards 'socialism.' Most social democratic parties are now appealing opportunistically for votes from whatever constituencies can be detected 'out there' by opinion polling. Their goal now is less to democratize capitalism than to bring elites to power with relatively free hands. What gave the earlier Left its place on the political map was that it shared a general political and moral discourse with social democracy. Because the 'new' social democracy no longer partakes of this discourse, the Left has lost its traditional moorings. On the other side of the ledger, it is now freer to define its own course.

Parallel changes *inside* the smaller world of the Left itself render the situation even more complex. The evolution of the working class is the most important of these. The socialist movement in general had always counted on the working class as base and hope. For the Left this had involved trying to build on the deeper meanings of anti-capitalist radicalism that it was certain lay in the working class.<sup>24</sup> The end of the post-war boom revealed that workers, both as base and hope, were not what they once had been, either in size or nature. Simultaneously the social importance of the new middle classes was *growing*.<sup>25</sup> All this made it very difficult for the Left to sustain the idea of workers as any kind of 'universal class,' at least within the specific national confines of advanced capitalist societies.

The changes undercut trade unions, the major organizational forms possessed by workers. The weakening of unions encouraged renewed employer anti-unionism and in a few places, the UK in particular, there was a massive onslaught against the legal and political positions that unions had acquired over decades. Unions were often pushed into very difficult corners to survive, including 'concession bargaining' with employers. To protect themselves, unions and their memberships accentuated boundaries between 'insiders' and 'outsiders,' even when these outsiders were workers as well. In politics, the exchange relationship between workers and social democrats cracked. In the earlier post-war period social democrats had promised policies that would enhance workers' income, job security and life chances. Changes in capitalism and social democracy meant that such promised benefits were less and less forthcoming. Workers came to be a less predictable electoral base for social democrats, and unions often began to take their distance from former partisan allies.

**As** the twentieth century moved into its last decades the internationalization of capitalism denationalized labour markets apace. In addition the socialist and workers' movements in the twentieth century had slowly but surely been nationalized, and their ideas, resources, policy programmes and outlooks focused upon the national arenas. It was understandable that national union movements sought to protect the threatened positions of their own members nationally, since their organizations were profoundly national. In a context of growing liberalization of elite values, this made them look like 'special interests' rather than the bearers of progress. The situation has become a trap for those on the left tempted by *ouvriérisme*. It is unquestionably very important for the Left to defend the gains workers have won over the years, but accepting the definitions of such struggles advanced by unions has opened the Left to the 'special interest' accusation as well.

The Left's next internal problem flows from the contradictory nature of the student and intellectual mobilizations of the 1960s and 1970s. The

*marxisant* discourses initially announced by student rebels proved misleading. Beneath the surface of student movements, in fact, was an unstable amalgamation of new middle strata counterculturalism and *gauchiste* utopianism. As the student rebellion ran its course the protest began to focus upon new issues, generating the new feminism, **enviromentalism**, and the 1980s peace movement. If some fragments of these newer movements claimed to be anti-capitalist, in most cases they saw their struggles as transcending 'older' debates about capitalism altogether. The *gauchiste* dimensions of the student movement, which had allowed student activists to announce themselves as 'true revolutionaries' often attached to Third Worldist vanguards (the Cubans, Chinese, Vietnamese and a few others), had very short half lives. Strident Marxism and the **formation** of sectarian collectives, often including missionary efforts to convert the workers on various factory floors and dabbling in terrorism, had been abandoned by the early 1970s.<sup>28</sup>

That the coming of new social movements brought an onslaught against the Left from intellectuals is evident from the flowering of literature about the 'New Social Movements.' One important school of thought around the French sociologist Alain Touraine claimed that the NSMs were the harbingers of new forms of protest appropriate to a post-industrial society in which new middle strata replaced workers as the location of progressive action? Habermasian analyses made NSMs the vanguard of struggle to sustain the 'life world' against colonization by 'the system,' while classifying workers' organizations as part of the **latter**.<sup>29</sup> Post-modernists and post-structuralists denounced the Left's efforts at 'meta-analysis' of the social world as **totalitarian**.<sup>30</sup> More generally, activists and intellectual interpreters of the NSMs rejected the Left's claim that anti-capitalism defined progressivism.

The collapse of the Socialist bloc in 1989 made a huge third contribution to the Left's new setting. 'Real, existing socialism' in its sclerosed Brezhnevite forms had been in decline for a considerable time before the events of 1989, as had the appeal of the Soviet model to the Left in advanced capitalist societies. Still, with all of its problems, the model had exercised a powerful influence inside the Left historically because of the activities of Communists inside the Left and Trotskyist counter-discussions. Beyond this, the defence of existing socialism had been conflated with progressive anti-imperialist positions before and during the Cold War. Finally, whether the Left liked it or not, the Soviet model and socialism *tout court* had been successfully amalgamated in the general political discourses of capitalist societies. The Left put on a brave face, or a **self-critical** one, after the ignominious collapse of the Soviet model, but the damage was great. On the other hand, the removal of the Soviet albatross from the Left's shoulders was an opportunity.

### *III Saying No to Capitalism Today: Questions in Search of New Answers*

... socialism is part of the struggle for the deepening and extension of democracy in all areas of life. Its advance is not inscribed in some preordained historical process, but it is the result of a constant pressure from below for the enlargement of democratic rights; and this **pressure** is itself based on the fact that the vast **majority** located at the lower ends of the social pyramid **needs** these rights ... to resist and limit the power to which they are subject ... This, however, is not enough. Socialism seeks not only the limitation of power, but its eventual abolition as the organizing principle of social life. There is a **profound** sense in which democracy, equality and socialization must be taken to be means to an end which ultimately defines socialism, namely the achievement of a greater degree of social harmony than can ever be achieved in societies based on domination and exploitation. . .  
Ralph Miliband, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*<sup>30</sup>

The situation of the Left today is very difficult. The discursive setting that established symbiosis between the Left and social democracy has disappeared. The coming of new social democracy has disoriented workers and others. When queried about promises of hope in difficult times, social democrats paraphrase Margaret Thatcher. 'There is no alternative' to **pro**-capitalist austerity and monetarism. Many ordinary workers have accepted this new package, along with a large part of the intelligentsia. Others gravitate towards national populist anger. The socialist Left that remains is greatly reduced in size and beleaguered by other 'progressives' who ridicule the very idea of socialism.

We are not yet at the end of history, however. Capitalism still secretes misery. In the 'West' one sees Brazilianized 'two-thirds' societies where 'insiders' fight tooth and nail to protect their positions at the expense of internal 'outsiders' whose exclusion from the surrounding setting of wealth and prosperity grows more intolerable by the day. Resource shortages and elite neo-liberalization have generated ever more ferocious attacks on industrial relations systems and welfare states. In the 'south' unregulated, low-wage, sweatshop exploitation and social degradation are rife, often in political settings where basic rights are denied and redress of popular grievances impossible.

Recent capitalist development has thus been busily preparing new recipes for social instability and rebellion around the globe. Nonetheless nothing guarantees that instability and rebellion will generate socialism or even be progressive. Only solid political work by the Left can promote such outcomes. Herein lies the opportunity contained in the Left's crisis. The first step toward seizing the opportunity is to face the most important questions about the Left's new setting.

#### *How to Understand the New Capitalism?*

Capitalism continues to produce muzzled democracy, inequality, economic harshness and exploitation, but it **has** changed in major ways since the end

of the post-war boom. The Left's first task should be to decode these changes. Mapping the new capitalism, uncovering its particular logics and the social relationships that it is creating are fundamental building blocks. One of the Left's great strengths throughout the post-war period was that it was better able to illuminate the deeper nature of capitalism than could those with commitments to the system. The influence of Left perspectives on imperialism and international relations, on the capitalist state, on ideology, on the nature of work and on the contradictory nature of the post-war boom were out of all proportion to the Left's size. New critical perspectives on the post-1989 world could be tremendously important in an intellectual universe otherwise dominated monotonically by technocrats and neo-liberals.

What do we need to know? An exhaustive list would be very long, but some matters stand out. At the top is understanding the internationalization of capital. Among other things we need to consider is the possibility that the interests of capitalism as a system and those of leading capitalist nation states have diverged somewhat. The new capitalists have enhanced capacities to move exploitation around the globe with almost as little regard for the political and social stability of 'advanced' societies as they have had for those of the South. The geography of the international labour market has also been transformed, making it necessary to understand the real meanings of the 'global city,' the development of new technoproductive regions both in the North and South and the logics of 'Brazilianization' in the North.

We need as well to know a great deal more about transnational class and economic actors. Nothing would help class analysis more than a convincing reconfiguration of international social forces. Is there something that can be labelled a 'cosmopolitan bourgeoisie?' How is it articulated to other fractions of the bourgeois class? To what extent have this class and the transnational market actually placed constraints on national decision-making? What are the structures of the transnational working class and how is it segmented? What does 'competitiveness' really mean in these circumstances?

Old concepts for designating those areas of the globe that are 'not us' are obsolete. This is not because global inequalities have disappeared, or even been attenuated, but because it no longer makes much sense to employ the simple dichotomies of the past. Inequalities have been redistributed between and among 'the others', and formerly third world interests are more fragmented. Even if some regions, like Africa, are worse off than ever, 'north-south' divisions, interests and relationships have become more complicated. We need a geography of these complexities and their implications.

Without overemphasizing the importance of ideas, it is also likely that

good critical Left intellectual work might enhance prospects for new progressive coalitions. Even on our preliminary list there are questions to which sound Left answers might enhance new social movement sympathies for the socialist cause. New patterns of gendering are an essential dimension of the transnational labour market. Shedding some light on the global structure of the changing gender division of labour and its connection to capitalist evolution might well create greater rapprochement between the Left and feminists. The environmentally destructive dynamics of the new capitalism are also huge. Charting them well might bring fruitful new contacts with environmentalists.

### *National vs International Strategies?*

Although the Left has been linked transnationally through numbered internationals and dense networks of informal contact, it has rarely been capable of serious transnational action?' The reasons for this are not hard to find. Today labour and other markets are now international and segmented in new ways that disrupt the unity of national working classes. The problems to be understood and faced are huge. Capital traditionally 'whipsawed' different unions, sectors and regions within nation states to gain advantage. The coincidence of national boundaries and capitalist economies gave workers opportunity to use national political and legal arenas for struggle against this. Capital is now much more able to use its transnational mobility to engage in social dumping to encourage social policy 'races to the bottom' in the heartlands of strong labour movements.

In this context reliance on national resources to the exclusion of new Labour internationalization will help capital, divide national labour movements from one another and render transnational solidarity even less likely." If the working class is now international in important objective ways, then strategic steps must be devised to internationalize its capacity to struggle. This is easier said than done, however, for two reasons. Many of the societies that now participate fully in the new transnationalized capitalist labour market are not democratic and deny workers their basic rights. Furthermore, in these societies it may well be in the interests of local workers to undercut those in advanced societies in order to benefit from the trickle down fruits of capitalist development. It is not always easy, therefore, to find eager transnational colleagues, even if unions and workers in the 'West' (who have analogous differences of interest from the others) decide to seek them out. The second problem arises because the best investment of a Western labour movement's resources remains national. Pressure on national governments is still the most effective means of getting concessions and of moving national governments to act in labour's favour in the international arena. Transnational action, if collectively central for workers as a larger group, can thus appear as a high cost

luxury ~~from~~ the point of view of national movements.

Transnational solidarity is thus a real challenge, as well as a great opportunity. Paradoxically, the way to develop it may begin by drawing a clearer picture of what progressive policies can still be undertaken at national level through national pressure. This involves finding different answers to the claims of neo-liberals and new social democrats that nothing can – or should – be done at this level at all. Such a picture would give the Left a better understanding of genuine international constraints and what might simultaneously be done internationally to cope with them. For the Left and labour energetically to promote human rights, greater democracy and civilized labour standards transnationally would be a dramatic gesture. It is important as well to develop international Left and labour programmes establishing proper limitations on the movement of capital. Acting to initiate and sustain transnational efforts to stimulate demand would also be significant. These are all 'reformist' proposals. But the issue of saying No to the new capitalism is complicated and initial steps will seem modest.

### *Offensive or Defensive?*

The most important self-assigned business of the Left historically has been to criticize the broader progressive world for its inadequacies in saying No to capitalism. This placed a premium on being strong and strident. When it was doing its work properly the Left was deconstructing the efforts of social democracy and connecting this deconstruction with arguments about how better to denounce and transcend capitalism. However, given its symbiotic ties with others, the Left was never very good at recognizing defensive historic moments, when the Left's enemies had a powerful upper hand. Clearly, however, there have been periods in the history of the socialist movement when it has made sense to protect historic gains against external threat. Everyone can recall cases when Left sectarianism was hugely costly – the refusal of Communists to cooperate with Social Democrats against the rise of Hitler comes to mind.

The geometry of today's situation is more complex. Now few outside the Left, strictly defined, are concerned with saying No to capitalism at all, even in ineffective ways. Perhaps this should mean a change in the Left's understanding of its role or at least enhanced sensitivity to the fluctuations of its environments. It can no longer be sure that pushing others to be more radical is consistently the right thing to do, and it must hone its capacities to distinguish between when advance is possible and when defensive action is appropriate. This is **important** because a case can be made that, for the time being, progressive forces and subordinate classes are in a strongly defensive period. One would have to be remarkably unobservant to miss the fact that many of the things that T.H. Marshall saw fifty years

ago as the product of ineluctable expansion towards generalized 'social citizenship' are under siege. Legal protection for workers to organize and bargain, universal programmes of social protection, equal access to decent education, entitlements to a decent minimal standard of living are **all** threatened in many of those societies we have perhaps too quickly labelled 'advanced.' Moreover, these days the threats come as easily from social democrats as neo-liberals. The destruction of such past victories would be a defeat for those who benefit from them directly and reduce their ability to move forward in the future. It would be an even greater loss for those in other parts of the globe who have not yet achieved them. With the changes in social democracy and the defection of much of the new middle strata from progressive politics there are few good candidates but the Left to lead the defence of such things.

Nevertheless, as the Left correctly pointed out when such victories were being won, they were insufficient. In the intervening years these criticisms have become even more justified. The Left thus must find ways to defend past victories **and** criticize the inadequacies of present programmes in the optic of saying No to capitalism, proposing viable alternatives and modifications to what exists in the name of a reformism opening to socialism. Threatened existing social programmes often involve unwieldy, patronizing bureaucracies. Their universality, where it exists, is often one of **noblesse oblige** – universally dependent and weak clients faced by condescending agents and experts, characteristics which enhance their vulnerability to attack. The principles of universal education guaranteeing equal opportunity, universal health care, disability protection, a decent living standard at all stages of life and other such things cannot be relinquished by the Left. But the programmes as they stand cannot be defended intact, lest the Left contribute to, rather than transcend, existing problems. The Left thus needs to sharpen its ability to make innovative proposals built on the principles of universality and equality. But these proposals must also make existing programmes more flexible, decentralized and above all democratic (in particular in ways that will minimize bureaucracy). To the degree to which such proposals, if enacted, would provide better social protection **and** promote greater democratic empowerment they would indeed be saying No to capitalism in quite a concrete way. But to do this the Left has to be willing to dirty its hands more in the elaboration of 'revolutionary' reformist policy proposals.

### ***The Left and Other Movements?***

The Left's relationships with the ~~new~~ social movements raises profound questions. In its defence the Left did not ignore issues of central concern to **NSMs**. Rather it tended to incorporate them into its own socialist discourse, redefining them in the process. More often than not the result

was that these issues were subordinated by the Left to 'more important' matters of class and class conflict. Women's issues were a case in point. Whatever the initial form of their expression, the Left had usually translated them into the concerns of women workers. Similarly, environmental matters were often subordinated to the Left's productivism. Issues involving the so-called private sphere were either collectivized or dismissed as petit bourgeois individualism. Peace issues were often subordinated to Cold War mapping of international class struggle. The reasons for the general approach were obvious. The socialist movement, including social democracy, had established hegemony over the definitions of radicalism.

Over the years the Left's propensity to translate the concerns of others into its own terms became rebarbative to NSM practitioners, to the point where the NSMs often classified the Left and the broader socialist movement as part of the enemy. Then, as social democracy shifted away from socialist discourse and the Left imploded, new social movements added a conviction of Left irrelevancy to its animosity. The socialist movement had lost its ability to arbitrate the definition of progressive behaviour in its own terms. The culmination of this, reached by the 1980s in most places, was open competition between the Left and the NSMs, and among the movements themselves, about whom and what were genuinely progressive. With no larger hegemonic movement to decide such things there could be no real decision.

This situation creates basic dilemmas for the Left. The highly competitive political market for the definition of what is progressive means that the Left's 'products,' class analysis and socialist goals, no longer have the comparative advantage they once had. Henceforth Left ideas will win or lose on the strength of the compelling nature of the case the Left can make for them. The invocation of traditional symbols and an appeal to scriptures will no longer work. In the new setting the Left will nonetheless have to engage in coalitional practices with social movements which do not share its commitment to socialism. The lingering tendency to compose a laundry list of various rebellious groups – the Left + social democrats + unionists + feminists + anti-racists + environmentalists + others may work for organizing demonstrations, but believing that all of these groups are 'really' socialist is a dangerous illusion. Many are not socialist at all. The absence of unifying notions of progressivism plus the place of NSMs in parliamentary democratic systems establishes a situation in which most NSMs will seek out 'pluralist' political deals from the establishment to benefit their own bases and causes rather than undertaking the more difficult tasks of cooperating with others. The Left has to seek coalitions in an ecumenical way. But it also has to think through the nature and logics of such coalitions. And, finally, the only way that the Left will succeed in

influencing the outlooks of such coalition members in socialist directions will be to convince them that the interests of women, environmentalism, people of colour and others really do lie in transcending capitalism. This will not happen simply because 'history is on our side.' The analyses, ideas and ability to convince others on such matters remain to be constructed.

### *Socialism, Equality and Individuals*

Finally, history has presented the Left with a basic problem in its political philosophy. What should be the contemporary meaning of equality? The socialist movement, writ large, settled for answers to this question that are no longer completely adequate. Whether in matters of education, treatment in the workplace, the nature of social programmes or private life the movement's response was that equality meant universality of treatment. Everyone should be approached in the same ways.

Such an outlook, part of the long democratic revolution, was laudable in the context of societies in which barriers to universality of treatment were endemic. Beneath this lay an assumption that everyone really would be the same if only the effects of evil social structures could be eliminated. It followed that removing such effects through political change would allow such cooperative and altruistic human similarity to blossom. All this was a far cry from **Marx's** own sense that socialism would liberate individuality in the multiplicity of ways it might be constructed in a social setting free of class power. Still, huge contributions to democracy, social advancement and human dignity were brought by this definition of equality. The definition nonetheless bore an artificial homogenization of genuine, differences among people. It also played into the consolidation of bureaucracies charged with the creation and administration of universality.

Saying No to capitalism in the name of a socialism that promises uniformity and standardization is a losing argument. Arguments for socialism must be able to claim credibly that there are other and better ways to sustain individual self-fulfilment than those proposed by capitalism. The Left needs to reconfigure the notion of equality to embrace human differences in point of departure and outcomes. It follows from this that individuals' desires for biographical and group distinctiveness are not simply artifacts of capitalist consumerism and competition. Capitalism does cultivate egoism and the desire to dominate through the accumulation of purchasable differences. But freedom involves the space to create and tolerate real differences. The Left's arguments must propose new egalitarian ways towards such an end. Decentralization, enhanced participation, new forms of education that **promote** diversity, genuine life-long learning and level playing fields, recognition of a wide range of lifestyle choices, different options in social policy and more effective democratic determination over such policy choices should be a part of the new egalitarianism.

## Moving On

There are many other questions that the Left will need to face, plus great disagreement with those that I have here highlighted. But the very fact that we can at this point agree that questions of such a basic nature now need to be posed indicates how deep the Left's present crisis is, how long it will take to resolve and how complicated its resolutions will be. It also points to the huge field of opportunity awaiting the Left. As we all know, and **as Ralph Miliband** constantly reminded us, capitalism is an inherently contradictory and unstable social order. It will continue to have its own deepening **crises**. And it will also continue to elicit rebellious responses from those it oppresses. The Left's task is to provide plausible and practical understanding to help workers and others find progressive ways to rebel. Without such help, there is a strong chance that future rebels will not be able to say No to capitalism effectively. As **Miliband** underlined, the erosion of beliefs that a 'comprehensive alternative to capitalist society' is possible

... is a matter of immense importance. For, in suggesting that there is no real alternative to the capitalist society of today, it plays its own part in creating a climate of thought which contributes to the flowering of **poisonous** weeds in the capitalist jungle ... racism, sexism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, ethnic hatreds, fundamentalism, intolerance ...<sup>14</sup>

Providing such help means that the Left must be capable of confronting and surmounting the present crisis. Crises are beginnings as well **as** endings.

## NOTES

Thanks to Jane Jenson for great help.

1. *Marxism and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 188–189.
2. Greater divergence existed in the rest of Scandinavia and in other smaller Northern European societies, even if many of the elements were put into place.
3. My own memories of Ralph Miliband's famous 'problems of contemporary socialism' at the LSE from 1962–1964 are of an intellectual collective **prodded** by **Miliband** to confront all of these arguments, from the Left, in an open-ended and tolerant way. The subsequent Left intellectual and political production of generations of Miliband's students demonstrates how effective this seminar, and its later complement, the LSE master's programme in political sociology, turned out to be.
4. **Miliband** was a notable exception here. *Parliamentary Socialism*, his first book, published in 1961 (London: Allen and Unwin), explored the 'relative autonomy' of the linkages between the Labour Establishment and British capitalism and elucidated the complex social mechanisms that led Labour to behave as it had done since the war. To **Miliband** it was not simply cravenness and bad ideas that led to compromise, but institutions and their workings.
5. Ralph **Miliband** was a persistent exception here as well. Although after 1989 he began to rethink his own experience with such **matters**, during the post-war period he was as careful as any major Left intellectual to sort out genuine socialist internationalism from pro-Soviet and anti-democratic cant. Stories of **Miliband** standing up in the midst of Soviet and Cuban 'high masses' and, in stentorian tones, telling important leaders the truth about their own behaviours are legendary. Miliband's own injunctions about **distin-**

guishing military intervention from socialist internationalism are worth citing. '... (Socialist military intervention) has generated great uncertainty, confusion and division. And it has commonly led to the adoption of positions which are not based on any obvious socialist principle but rather on antecedent sympathies or antipathies, according to which a particular intervention is approved or condemned ...' in Miliband, *Class Power and State Power* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 230–1.

6. The work of intellectuals like **Miliband** in universities was of particular importance to the socialist radicalization of student rebels, particularly in Anglo-Saxon settings where the cogent presentation of alternative, often Marxist, ideas sweeping away the bland arguments in vogue about growing social and political consensus was a breath of **fresh** air. This work was particularly appreciated by students when the intellectuals in question were open and sympathetic towards the actions of student rebels and willing to break with the self-protective professional conventions of the academy. **Ralph Miliband** was one of these rare such individuals.
7. **Ralph Miliband's** *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969) was the most important contribution to this debate. That the 'state' was a complex entity separable from government and the workings of the economy, but ultimately linked as a pivot in the maintenance of capitalist democratic societies, and that it deserved new analysis may seem obvious in retrospect. It was most certainly not so at the time, however, either among 'bourgeois' specialists or **Left** analysts. **Miliband's** book spoke directly and clearly to both. Like *Parliamentary Socialism*, it stressed the need to ground theory in empirical investigation and eschewed the **formalistic** structuralism found in the works of **Nicos Poulantzas**. The exchanges between **Miliband** and **Poulantzas** helped launch the broader debate on the capitalist state. The 'theory of the state' debate which raged through academe made **Ralph Miliband** one of the most-cited of political scientists, as confirmed in a survey done by the American Political Science Association in the 1970s.
8. Among the most important of these contributions were **Miliband's** *Marxism and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) and **Nicos Poulantzas's** *State, Power and Socialism* (London: Verso, 1978). Ironically, after their earlier debate, these two new works showed that their authors had come to share many assumptions and outlooks.
9. *Socialism For A Sceptical Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 69.
10. **Fritz Scharpf's** magnificent *Crisis and Choice in European Social Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) analyzes the impossible policy dilemmas posed for social democratic governments in the new circumstances.
11. See **Göran Therborn**, 'The Two-Thirds, One-Third Society,' in **Stuart Hall** and **Martin Jacques**, eds. *New Times* (London: Lawrence and **Wishart**, 1989). **Gösta Esping Anderson's** *Three Worlds of Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990) traces labour market changes of this kind in a comparative way.
12. The degree of union movement decline varies from country to country. For some figures, see **Jelle Visser**, *European Trade Unions in Figures* (Boston: **Kluwer**, 1989).
13. For European data see **Guido Baglioni** and **Colin Crouch** eds. *European Industrial Relations* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1990).
14. There is a gigantic literature on such matters. See, among other things, **Rober Boyer**, ed. *The Search for Labour Market Flexibility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); **Richard Hyman** and **Wolfgang Streeck** eds. *Industrial Relations and Technical Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); **Michael Piore** and **Charles Sabel**, *The Second Industrial Divide* (New York: Basic, 1984); **Steven Wood**, ed. *The Transformation of Work* (London: Unwin, 1989).
15. **Richard Gillespie**, in concluding his edition of a group of articles on European social democratic renewal, announced '... the existence of a European 'wave' of social democratic programmatic renewal effort during the 1980s, the sweep of which was if anything broader than the previous renewal wave in the 1950s.' p. 174 in *West European Politics*, **16,1**, January 1993, Special Issue on Rethinking Social Democracy in Western Europe,

## GEORGE ROSS

- edited by Richard Gillespie and William E. Patterson.
16. Education and retraining programmes are a favourite new policy area, as are income maintenance and 'social reinsertion' programmes for those who must be sacrificed to enhance factor mobility.
  17. The fascinating story of the French Left's first years in power, including the 'great shift' of **1982–83**, is told from a number of policy points of view in George Ross, Stanley Hoffmann and Sylvia Malzacher eds. *The Mitterrand Experiment* (New York: Polity-Oxford, 1987). Among the useful French sources see Roland Favier and Pierre Martin-Rolland, *La Dcennie Mitterrand*, 2 volumes (Paris: Seuil, 1991, 1992) and Serge Halimi, *Sysyphé est fatigué, les échecs de la gauche au pouvoir* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1993).
  18. On Spanish labour see Robert Fishman, *Working-Class Organization and the Return to Democracy in Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); See also Richard Gillespie 'The Break-up of the 'Socialist Family': Party-Union Relations in Spain, **1982–1989**', *West European Politics* 13/1 (January 1990). Richard Gillespie, *The Spanish Socialist Party* (New York: Oxford UP, 1989).
  19. We could also include the Portuguese Socialists, who followed a route like the Spanish. The Italian Socialists, given the Italian political system, followed a sinuous route of national coalition-building which led their leader, Bettino Craxi, to become Prime Minister. As we now know, the operation was premised on a corrupt clientelism which has destroyed the party's credibility and may put Craxi and his lieutenants in prison.
  20. The strength of the Left in the broader orbit of British Labour, plus the powerful pull of workerism in British social democratic culture, was what made Labour's movement towards 'modernization' so complex. Ralph Miliband was a central figure in organizing alternatives to this evolution. The Socialist Society, which he and others founded in the early **1980s**, became a remarkable centre for Left debate, later eliciting the Chesterfield conferences. Miliband's 1982 book *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) was an important benchmark for the Left in this long, and ultimately losing, struggle.
  21. The illustrative material could be endless, including, among others, the German and Austrian, Dutch and Danish Social Democrats. Closer to North American home, albeit on a provincial level in Canada's federal system, the experience of the Rae New Democrat government after 1991 is classic.
  22. For an excellent review of this see Andrew Martin, in Peter Gourevitch et al *Unions and Economic Crisis* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984). On employer attacks see Peter Swenson *Fair Shares* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). On broader economic policy matters see Jonas Pontusson, *The Limits of Social Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).
  23. Good sources for general comparative considerations of these matters are Frances Fox Piven, ed. *Labour Parties in Postindustrial Societies* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991) and Perry Anderson and Patrick Camiller, eds. *Mapping The West European Left* (London: Verso, 1994).
  24. One of Ralph Miliband's strengths was the distance that he kept from *ouvriérisme*, even if this connected with one of his few weaknesses, a similar distancing from the political economy of class analysis altogether. Unlike the workerists who saw in the life of trade-unionism and the spontaneous expressions of working class culture direct emanations of rebelliousness and a desire to transcend capitalism, Miliband saw workers in ordinary circumstances as quite conservative. Miliband was primarily interested in the sociology and practice of politics. Beyond this his convictions were that capitalism was a social system that inevitably created its own persistent oppositions from workers and others. What counted, to use a term that he employed frequently, was the 'desubordination' of different social groups which varied in time and which the capitalist state and capitalist politicians spent their time trying to minimize. At certain points, however, efforts at

containment were **insufficient**, and then significant change became possible. Here Miliband's conception of the Left's role entered, for it was the Left's task to keep alive and promote ideas about the nature and direction of such change – towards socialism – so that they would be available at precisely such moments. For a more general survey of this perspective, see Ralph Miliband, *Divided Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

25. Here Miliband's great colleague and rival, Nicos Poulantzas, was for once more acute in his analysis than **Miliband** himself. Poulantzas was convinced of the growing political importance and complex identities of what he labelled the 'new petite bourgeoisie.' To Poulantzas, the 'desubordination' of these groups visible in the 1960s and 1970s was of a very different type from that of workers, and in many cases contradictory to it. See Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1975).
26. Many ex-revolutionaries then connected with the 'new social movements' while others became apostate Left intellectuals, making new, media-sponsored careers denouncing their earlier selves, along with 'master narratives' and various other mortal dangers stemming from the hubris of the Enlightenment. The French 'new philosophers' were the most outrageous practitioners of such apostasy, but they were far from alone.
27. In the eyes of Touraine and his followers the movements of which social democracy and the Left were components were attached to the earlier social forms of industrial society and destined to decline. See **Alain** Touraine et al. *The Workers' Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991).
28. Habermasian celebrators of NSMs proudly announced that the movements had transcended earlier fixations on capitalism, the market and the 'material' more generally. **Claus** Offe had the rare perspicacity, however, to note that the positioning of NSMs between Left and Right was problematic, depending a great deal on how both poles reacted to new sources of protest. See Claus Offe in *Social Research*, Summer, 1985.
29. The most valiant effort to avoid the excommunicative reductionism of Tourainians and **Habermasians** and the relativism of post-modernists while connecting 'old' with 'new' forms of protest, that of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985) attacked the **Left** for its attachment to metanarrative while reinventing its own vague metanarrative about the forward progress of democracy.
30. *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* p. 57.
31. The major exception was the **Comintern** where, in fact, national Communist parties were subordinated to the objectives of the Soviet Union.
32. There are very good empirical illustrations of this. Labour's inability to generate more effective transnational cooperation within the European **Community/Union** after 1985 undoubtedly helped make the consequences of the '1992' programme and its sequels even more neo-liberal than they might have been.
33. *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* p. 70.