

PREFACE

THE THEME OF THIS VOLUME of the *Socialist Register* was first conceived in 1995 with the following general question in mind: as we approach the end of the millennium, what is to succeed the first great socialist project that was conceived in Western Europe in the nineteenth century, and variously implemented and frustrated by communism and social democracy in the twentieth? We had no illusions that an answer to this question would be found by cudgelling the brains of however large a number of left-wing intellectuals. But we did think that the time had come to renew the left's vision and spirit and that the *Register* could hope to contribute something useful for this purpose. We wanted to break with the legacy of a certain orthodox kind of Marxist thinking which rejected utopian thought as 'unscientific' just because it was utopian, ignoring the fact that sustained political struggle is impossible without the hope of a better society that we can, in principle and in outline, imagine. And we particularly felt that in face of the collapse of communism, as well as the rejection by 'third way' social democracy of any identification with the socialist project, there was now, especially in the context of the growing crisis of the neo-liberal restoration, an opening as well as a need for imaginative thought.

Our goals were relatively modest. We wanted to sample some of the elements of new socialist utopias that are already emerging from the rethinking and regrouping that has been taking place among progressives of many kinds – trade unionists, feminists, ecologists, scientists, philosophers, political economists, etc – since the 1980s. And we wanted to challenge our contributors – and our readers – to reflect on how these elements might be combined to inform and inspire a new socialist project for the new millennium. The elements of this project are *necessary* in that the ideas and models they provide – or something like them – are essential to any new socialist project worth fighting for; some of them may even be necessary for the survival of the species. We also wanted to contrast these ideas and models with others that are being

canvassed today and which are *unnecessary*, in the sense that on closer inspection they prove not to be utopias at all, but blind alleys. And re-imagining a humane socialist future is all the more required in light of the positively dystopian ‘brave new worlds’ that the organic intellectuals of capitalism are promoting for the twenty-first century, such as those touted by the spin-doctors of the bio-engineering industry, on the one hand, and NATO on the other.

Obviously we could not hope to be at all comprehensive, or even ‘balanced’ in our coverage (what exactly should be balanced with what?), but we could hope to help put the question of renewing the socialist goal back on the agenda. Above all, we hope this volume will contribute to loosening the grip that the narrow, alienated conception of ‘reality’ peddled by the neoliberals has had on too much left thinking in the past decade, and encourage people to refocus their imaginations and their political ambitions on the fundamental ideals that have inspired socialism throughout its history. It is time to refuse definitively the etiolated, increasingly hypocritical conception of ‘democracy’ which even social-democratic parties have come to accept and to insist on a far fuller and richer democracy than anything now available. It is time to reject the prevailing disparagement of everything collective as ‘unrealistic’ and to insist on the moral and practical rightness, as well as the necessity, of egalitarian social and economic relations. It is time to assert the attractions, as well as the necessity, of a society unhooked from subordination to ‘growth’ based on production for profit, consumerism, sexism, militarism and the rest; and to spell out some of the conditions under which socialist goals can be realised – above all the development of popular democratic capacities and the structures that nurture rather than stifle or trivialise them. And, taking even a slightly longer view, what could be more *realistic* than this?

It is sad that this volume, the thirty-sixth since the *Register* was launched in 1964, is the first one not to have been seen through every stage of its production by Martin Eve, the founder and publisher of Merlin Press, since its theme was very close to his heart. Martin died in October 1998 at the age of 74, after a twelve-year fight against cancer which gradually robbed him of his physical mobility, but never of his keen intellect, his wry sense of humour or his phenomenal personal courage.

A fascinating and moving book of memoirs of Martin and his work (*Martin Eve Remembered*, edited by Walter Kemsley) has now been published by Merlin, but his special relationship with the *Register* makes it more than just appropriate to commemorate him briefly here too. Having read volume I of Marx’s *Capital* at the age of sixteen and in his own words, having ‘got the general idea’, Martin never subsequently departed from it; whether he was in the Communist Party or later, after 1956, in the Labour Party, for him ‘it was always one line,’ as he told his friend and Merlin author Istvan Meszaros, and the *Socialist Register* was very much its flagship. He founded Merlin Press in 1956 with virtually no capital and built it into one of the most distinguished small left-wing publishing houses in Britain by sheer hard work – doing everything himself, from editing

and proofreading to marketing and shipping – and extraordinarily shrewd judgement. His close friendship with Edward Thompson led to his publishing many of Thompson’s famous works and his wide culture enabled him to bring out successful English translations of much important work originally published in foreign languages, including books by Lukacs, Levi-Strauss, Bohm-Bawerk, Mandel and others, in addition to many other leading British authors.

Martin was always willing, as well, to put his money (what little he had) where his mouth was: when the British civil servant Sarah Tisdall was jailed in 1984 under the Official Secrets Act (for, as Martin put it, ‘revealing a political secret, not a military one – i.e. one that has to be kept not from foreign governments but from the British people’), he wrote to congratulate her and offered her a job as his assistant, which she duly took up following her release. In politics as in sailing – his other great passion was a wooden gaff-rigged smack, almost as old as himself – he was never tempted to compromise but kept steadfastly to his course, always steering, as he would say, ‘in the general direction of socialism because there was no worthwhile alternative, and getting the utmost out of the voyage.

The relationship between the *Socialist Register* and its publisher was an unusually close one. It was Martin who in 1963 suggested the name to its founding editors, Ralph Miliband and John Saville (brought to mind by Thompson’s account of Cobbett’s *Political Register* in *The Making of the English Working Class*). The thanks expressed to him in every preface since 1964 were never pro-forma: they spoke to – indeed they may have understated – what they often called his ‘indispensable’ help. The Editors sought his advice on the topics to be covered and took very seriously his comments on the essays submitted by our contributors. And Martin was the very rare case of a publisher who also took his turn as editor and author: he edited (with David Musson who was then working with him at Merlin Press) the 1982 volume while Miliband and Saville took a well-deserved ‘sabbatical’; and he contributed his own essay on ‘Anti-Communism and the American Intervention in Greece’ to the 1984 volume.

Despite the fact that for most of the *Register*’s existence the manuscript for each annual volume would arrive at Merlin bit by bit, ‘with each contributor having written their piece on different types of paper and in different formats’ (as Sarah Tisdall gingerly put it), Martin and his staff would greet each essay with enthusiasm and interest – and in remarkably short order would produce a high-quality book with very few errors. Our belated conversion in recent years to computer and internet modernized the process, but what remained unchanged was that our publisher still never saw what we were publishing as a commodity. This is not to say that Martin was unconcerned with the marketing of the *Register*; but it is to say, as Diane Elson does in her essay in this volume, that the *Socialist Register*’s production was not market-determined. Not profit, but commitment to a common ‘socialist humanist project’, as he put it, was what motivated Martin as publisher of the *Register*; and nothing pleased him more in recent years, as socialist politics and theory went into decline in

Britain, than to see the growing international enthusiasm for the *Register*. It was typical of him that he gave away the rights to publish editions of the *Register* in India and Greece. And it was no less typical that even in the last weeks of his life, he continued to work enthusiastically in preparing for publication the essays for the 1999 volume. That volume was dedicated to him without our knowing how near death he was. He knew – and was moved by the dedication.

Martin Eve will be sadly missed, but before he died he had identified a successor, Tony Zurbrugg; and we are very glad indeed that Tony has accepted the challenge, and extremely grateful for the energy and skill he, with the help of Bruce Brine, has immediately brought to bear in the copy-editing and production of this volume, several signs of which are already evident in its design. Both he and we have been helped enormously in the transition by Pat Eve, for which we are greatly indebted. We also once again owe considerable thanks, especially for his help in the editing and proofreading of each essay, to the *Register's* graduate assistant at York University Alan Zuege. He has been joined this year by Marsha Niemeijer, who has been responsible for preparing the *Register's* website, which can be reached at <http://www.yorku.ca/org/socreg/>. For his help on this, we want to express our thanks to David d'Andrea, as we do also to Dave Timms in London, Carlos Torres in Toronto and all the staff of Monthly Review in New York for their ongoing contribution to 'socialist marketing' the *Register*. Finally, we want to express our appreciation to Eric Canepa and Amy Holmes for helping with the translation of Frigga Haug's essay for this volume.

Among our contributors, Sam Gindin is Assistant to the President of the Canadian Autoworkers Union. Norman Geras is Chair of the Department of Government at the University of Manchester; and Terry Eagleton is Warton Professor of English at Oxford University. Frigga Haug teaches sociology and social psychology at the Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Politik in Hamburg; and Diane Elson teaches development studies at the University of Manchester. Alan Zuege is a doctoral candidate in political science at York University, Toronto. Kate Soper teaches philosophy at the University of North London; and Johanna Brenner coordinates and teaches women's studies at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. Ricardo Blaug teaches politics at the University of Leeds; and Judith Adler Hellman teaches in the social science and political science departments at York University, Toronto. Colin Duncan teaches history at McGill University in Montréal. Julian Tudor Hart is a general practitioner in Wales who is President of the Socialist Health Association in Britain; and Varda Burstyn is an independent writer and consultant who is Vice-Chair of Greenpeace Canada. Carl Boggs is Professor of Social Sciences at the National University in Los Angeles; and Peter Gowan teaches politics at the University of North London. While reminding our readers of the *Register's* traditional disclaimer that neither the contributors nor editors necessarily agree with everything in the volume, we want to express our gratitude to our contributors for all the effort they have put into the *Socialist Register 2000*.

Readers may have noted as they opened this volume that we are initiating another change this year. It concerns the *Register's* contributing editors which have until now been grouped in two editorial collectives in Manchester and Toronto. These collectives were established to assist Leo Panitch following the death of the *Register's* founding editor Ralph Miliband, and fulfilled this role brilliantly at a critical time. The subsequent appointment of Colin Leys as co-editor, however, and the movement of several people away from Manchester and Toronto, have changed the situation again. Instead of two 'collectives' we will now just have contributing editors in the UK and North America, and corresponding editors elsewhere, and we will perhaps shift the balance further towards the latter over time. Meantime this year sees the retirement of two contributing editors, Anthony Arblaster and John Saul, to whom we extend our very grateful thanks.

One of the most important functions of our contributing editors has been to help us map out the themes of all the volumes of the *Register* since 1996, when we set out what may well have been the last 'five year plan' of the century. We will complete that plan with next year's volume, which will follow up on this year's theme of rethinking socialist vision by reexamining socialist agency. Growing inequality and the spread of capitalist social relations that accompanies globalization makes class as central to understanding the dynamics of contemporary capitalism as it ever has been; yet class as a political relation – in the sense of workers 'consciously forming a class insofar as they engage in a common battle against another class' – remains deep in crisis. To begin the new century, therefore, we thought it would be appropriate for socialist thinkers to undertake a detailed register of the state of the global proletariat, the changing experiences of work and 'ways of living', the transformations entailed by migration and feminization, the new patterns of working class organisation, identity formation and politics that are emerging in various zones of the world. We plan to publish the 2001 *Register* in the fall of 2000. We invite our readers to send us their ideas for subsequent volumes and to partake in discussion on *Register* essays and themes by visiting the website at <http://www.yorku.ca/org/socreg/> or by contacting the Socialist Register at socreg@yorku.ca.

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L.P. C.L.