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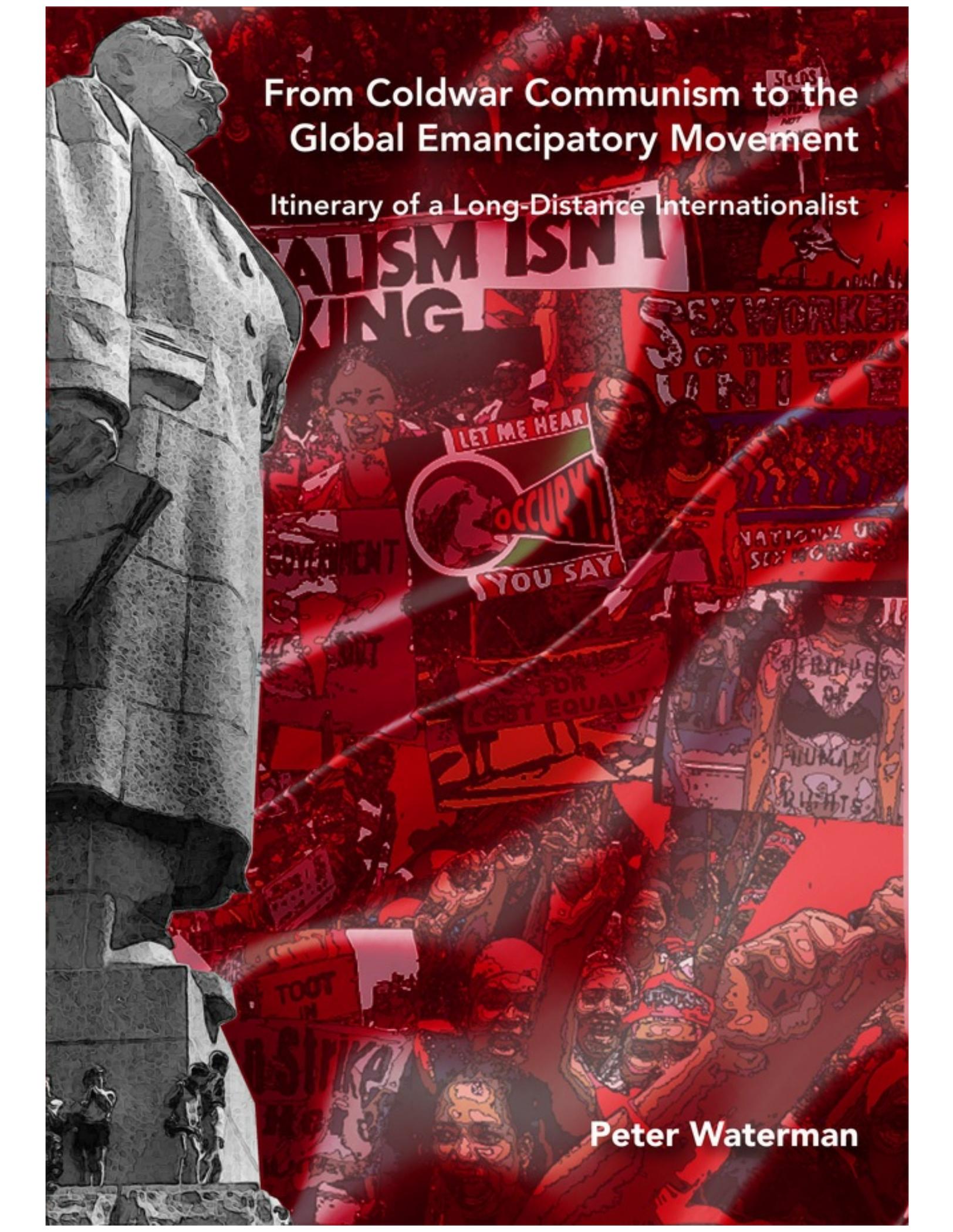
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# From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement

Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist

Peter Waterman

# **From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement**

## **Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist**

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# Cover Designs

By Daniel Waterman [huasquero@me.com](mailto:huasquero@me.com)

The Stalin statue on the front cover is from a photo by the author: 'Liberation Day, Prague, May 8, 1956, was the first time I had seen anyone on the pedestal of the world's largest such monument. Were they waiting for the oracle to speak? Stalin's hand was, Napoleon-style, in his greatcoat. Czechs said he had promised to pay for the statue, but that when he heard the cost, he kept his hand on his wallet'.

# The Book in Pictures

An online book of captioned photos and other illustrations, is being planned, under the title *The Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist Illustrated*. This will consist mostly of my own photos. And it will be structured according to the chapters of the present book. Until it appears, information can be obtained from [peterwaterman1936@gmail.com](mailto:peterwaterman1936@gmail.com).

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## Some previews...

### Helena Sheehan

*This autobiography crosses countries and continents. It spans decades. It traverses the places and traces the times through one life and the lives intersecting this life. It does so grounded in a healthy dialectic between self and world, revealing much about growing up in a Communist household in the nineteen forties-fifties and participating in the World Social Forums in the two thousands, as well as a myriad of movements and events, people and places, attitudes and ideologies along the way from the one to the other. The account of Prague in 1968 is especially fascinating. Peter Waterman was too implicated to be Zelig but too peripheral to be Dubček. It is a view from a particular focal length that is unusual in the historical discourse on this seminal turn of events. The book is a lively account of a life vigorously lived. It is critical and self-critical in a way that many memoirs are not. Read it.*

[Helena Sheehan is Professor Emerita of Dublin City University, where she taught philosophy, science and the media, on which she has published extensively. Born in the USA, she became a nun, was drawn to Marxism and Communism, has traveled widely, lived and taught in Russia and South Africa. She has published a presentation on the 'International Lenin School', and has also written autobiographically.]

### Flavia Braga Vieira

Peter Waterman here presents a wider public with his 'Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist'. The book is above all a gift and a tribute to all former militants who have devoted their lives, as Peter has, to the cause of labour and communist internationalism. Many of their struggles are revealed in the narrative of this particular life. The book is also a gift to those studying previous generations who have tried to uncover the forms of internationalism and contradictions amongst workers. Many of their problems and doubts can be clarified by reading this account. The book is also an inspiring gift to young scholars and activists who, like me, seek to understand and extend international links 'from below' in the contemporary world. The autobiography of Peter Waterman is very important for internationalist militants from all over the globe. It is required reading for all who believe in a world without borders, where freedom and equality can be creative and fundamental parts of the lives of men and women.

[Flavia Braga Vieira is author of a Brazilian book on the Via Campesina network in the light of internationalism (Braga Viera 2010), continues to write on internationalism. She teaches at the Federal University, Rio de Janeiro, and is active in university and other social movements.]

### Boaventura de Sousa Santos

*This is an admirable memoir of an intellectual-activist who has lived most intensely the progressive struggles of the last sixty years of world history. Yes, world history, because despite being born in*

*Europe, Peter, in the best tradition of Communist internationalism, participated in struggles and movements, not only in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in Africa and most recently in Latin*

*America. But this is much more than a memoir. It is so well documented that, in this personal experience, there are reflected some of the most decisive events of contemporary history. It is a living history book. But even more than this, this book is so clearly and vividly written that at times it reads like the script for an imaginary documentary of our times. This book should be read by all concerned with our recent history in order to get a much more complex inside view of what happened while it was happening. In particular it should be read by the youth in order to get a close-up of the difficulties and possibilities in building another possible world at a time where there existed a vibrant international communist movement. It is up to such youth to evaluate whether difficulties are now less or more daunting, the possibilities less or more luminous.*

Boaventura de Sousa Santos is Professor of Sociology, University of Coimbra, Portugal and has positions at several other universities. He has published widely on law, the World Social Forum and the global justice and solidarity movement, more recently on *If God was a Human Rights Activist* (Portuguese, Spanish) and *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (2014)

# Some Inspirations...

## William Morris

*I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.*

*A Dream of John Ball, 1886*

## Lucio Magri

*I am, then, a living private archive, in storage. For a Communist, isolation is the gravest of sins, which must be accounted for to others and to oneself. But if sin – forgive this ironic concession to the fashion and expediency that today moves so many to a sudden search for God – opens the way of the Lord, isolation might help in approaching the tasks outlined here, by allowing for a certain useful detachment. I cannot claim ‘I was not there’, ‘I did not know’. In fact I said one or two things when it was inconvenient, and so now have the freedom to defend what should not be disowned, and to ask myself what could have been done, or might yet be done, beyond the bric-a-brac of everyday politics. It is not true that the past – of Communists, or of anyone else – was entirely predetermined; just as it is not true that the future is wholly in the hands of the young who are yet to come. The old mole continues to dig, but he is blind and does not know where he is coming from or going to; he digs in circles. And those who cannot or will not trust to Providence must do their best to understand him, and by doing so help him on his way.*

*‘The Tailor of Ulm’, New Left Review, No. 51, May-June, 2008.*

## Edward Said

*[T]here is something fundamentally unsettling about intellectuals who have neither offices to protect nor territory to consolidate and guard; self irony is therefore more frequent than pomposity, directness more than hemming and hawing. But there is no dodging the inescapable reality that such representations by intellectuals will neither make them friends in high places nor win them official honours. It is a lonely condition, yes, but it is always better than a gregarious tolerance for the way things are.*

*(cited John Saul, 2009: 423)*

## **Hillel**

*If I am not for myself, then who will be for me?  
And if I am only for myself, then what am I?  
And if not now, when?*

(from Hillel the Elder, 110 BC, died 7 AD, and used as a book title by Primo Levi (1995))

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### References

# Preface

This work has taken a couple of decades to complete, having been through innumerable drafts, on various updates of Word, and *finally* (I live in hope) on a MacBookAir version of Word. One or two chapters, in current or earlier versions, have appeared here and there. An earlier draft of the book was actually accepted by a Swiss academic publishing house. But at a certain point I began to worry about the amount I would have to pay them, and then how much any reader might have to. I also began to wonder whether (as conventional publishing is assailed by that of ‘real virtuality’) the distinction between the academic publisher and the vanity press was not beginning to disappear. Having said a somewhat uncertain ‘thanks but no thanks’ to this publisher, I then found that the industry of online publishing had grown exponentially, with companies therein pushing their particular services with all the tricks familiar from the vacation, cellphone, fast-food and other capitalist industries. Their use of email and personal phone calls, from staff whom one has to assume are precarious workers paid for the fish they net, approaches what in the world of finance is called ‘boiler room’ tactics. My decision to go with [into-ebooks.com](http://into-ebooks.com) was due to its freedom from the boiler room culture and, of course, to my satisfaction with the two previous books of mine they had published, indicated just below.

Due to the long gestation period, a certain proportion of the hyperlinks (the computer clickable references) have been lost beyond recovery. I have done my best here. And I can only hope that anything lost will be compensated for by the links that *do* work and the print references in an extensive bibliography. Readers – or at least reviewers – will certainly let me know. As far as my own more recent writings are concerned, readers can have access to my two free online compilations (Waterman 2011a and 2012b).

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following for their contributions to this book. Most are mentioned in the text, from which at least part of their role may become evident. Others possibly not, but they will, hopefully, know why they are acknowledged. Some of those listed have died and others I have been unable to track down. My appreciation reaches, however, beyond sight, beyond the web, beyond the grave.

I would firstly like to mention the following, in alphabetical order of first names, for direct contributions to this book:

Aleksandra Osminina, my bridge to Post-Communist Russia and my 1950s friends there; Alun Goronwy Hughes; Carlo Ripa di Meana, for his own autobiographical example; Daniel Waterman, my son, for his experience with self-publishing and for his covers; Gerry Pocock, Communist friend from the 50's and 60's, and my proof-reader 2013-14 (not responsible for added errors); Helena Sheehan, another Communist autobiographer; Gerben Zaagsma, for his work on international/ist Jewish Communists; Jiří Navrátil, for correcting more than my Czech (though not responsible for what I did with his corrections); Graham Stevenson, for his online biographies of British Communists; Jason, Selena and Robin Cohen, for good advice on self-publishing; Luis Sifuentes and Prem Mohabir, my ever-patient computer techies in Lima and The Hague; Ken Post, old friend and colleague, for his comments on various chapters and his own autobiographical effort; Marcel v.d. Linden, who systematically read and commented on numerous chapters; Milla Karppinen and the folks at Into-Ebooks; Renita Grigorieva, for surviving, and for returning to me (fifty years later) the Lost Scrolls of my 1957 visit to Moscow; Stuart Christie, for his autobio and for inspiring my opening lines; Tom Madden, a founder of the International Union of Students, for his memoirs; Tore-Jarl Bielenberg, old IUS friend, for his oral and visual contributions; Vilborg (Villa) Hardardóttir, with whom I first discussed writing (jointly) on our time at the IUS; Wikipedia, for saving me a zillion hours of biographical, bibliographic and historical work; Numerous others also contributed and I hope their efforts are evident from the book.

Secondly, I would like to thank, also in first name alphabetical order, people who were significant to the life this book records. More about most of them will be found in the text itself (so will various others, of course):

Alexander (Sasha) Yankov; Amrita Chhachhi; Anna-Ruth Wertheim; Anissa Helie-Lucas; Annie Fels-Kupferschmidt; Árni Bjornsson; Arvind Das; Bertell and Paule Ollman; Boaventura de Sousa Santos; Brian Bicat; Britha Mikkelsen; Cees Hamelink; Cheng Jiming; Choli (Ana) Melnick; Dan Gallin; Daniel Chavez; Dave Hollis; Dave Spooner; David Waterman; Denis Sulmont; Eddie Webster; The *Programa Democracia y Transformación Global*, Lima: Elsa Duhagon and the *Choike* website, Montevideo; Ewa Charkiewicz; Gerrit Huizer; Giuseppe Caruso; Henryk Szlajfer; Hilary Wainright; Igor Biriukov; Immanuel Wallerstein; Jai Sen; Jackie Litherland; Jane Wills; Jaroslav Těhle; Jeremy Brecher; John Holloway; John Hoyland; John Saul; Kim Scipes; Laurence Cox and the *Interface* Team; Marieme Helie-Lucas; Maritza Burgos; Maruja Barrig; Massimo de Angelis; Medical staff from Medisch Centrum Haaglanden (The Hague), the Hospital Pró Cardíaco (Rio) and the Clínica San Felipe (Lima); Moema Miranda; Monty Johnstone; Nester Luthuli, Nigel Haworth; Örsan Şenalp;

Patrick Bond; Peter Fryer; Pierre Rousset; Rafael Roncagliolo; Raphael Hoetmer; Raphael Samuels; Ray Waterman; Ria v.d. Meer, Ricardo Ramirez (Rolando Moran); Robin Cohen; Ronaldo Munck; Ruth Waterman-Kupferschmidt; Sarah Berger; Sanjay Mitra; Sheila Lucas; Sheila Rowbotham; Sylvester Ejiofor; Tamara Waterman; Teivo Teivainen; Thanh-Dam Truong; Tim Costello; Yuzo Tanaka; Zuzana Hughes (formerly Dvořáková and Kot'átková).

Lastly – but actually, of course, firstly – Gina ‘No Fear of Flying’ Vargas, my partner/compañera (more recently wife) for well over two decades, whilst I was agonising over this book. She not only suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous procrastination but encouraged (and even threatened) me concerning its completion. I am still hoping that if and when it finally gets out of my computer and into or onto one or other public realm, she will do her own fascinating, moving and uproarious autobio.

# Living an Old Red Internationalism

2

**DESCRIPTION-SIGNALEMENT**

| Bearer—Titulaire            |                           | *Wife—Femme |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| Profession )                | <b>STUDENT</b>            |             |
| Profession )                |                           |             |
| Place and date of birth )   | <b>26/1/36</b>            |             |
| Lien et date de naissance ) | <b>LONDON</b>             |             |
| Residence )                 | <b>LONDON</b>             |             |
| Résidence )                 |                           |             |
| Height )                    | <b>5</b> ft. <b>8</b> in. |             |
| Taille )                    |                           |             |
| Colour of eyes )            | <b>GREY</b>               |             |
| Couleur des yeux )          |                           |             |
| Colour of hair )            | <b>BROWN</b>              |             |
| Couleur des cheveux )       |                           |             |
| Special peculiarities )     |                           |             |
| Signes particuliers )       |                           |             |

**\*CHILDREN-ENFANTS**

| Name-Nom           | Date of birth-Date de naissance | Sex-Sexe |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| <b>SEE PAGE 25</b> |                                 |          |

Usual Signature of Bearer / Signature du Titulaire: **Peter Waterman.**

Usual Signature of Wife / Signature de sa Femme: \_\_\_\_\_

3

Bearer (Titulaire)



Wife (Femme)

(Photo)

**CANCELLED**

The author, aged 19, 1955, before his first-ever job with the International Union of Students in Communist Prague

## CHAPTER 1

# Britain, 1936-55: Growing up Jewish, Middle-Class, Communist and Internationalist<sup>1</sup>

*Arbeiter, Bauern nehmt die Gewehre, nehmt die Gewehre zur Hand!  
Zerschlagt die faschistischen Räuberheere, setzt alle Herzen in Brand.  
Pflanzt eure roten Banner der Arbeit auf jeden Acker, auf jede Fabrik.  
Dann steigt aus den Trümmern der alten Gesellschaft die sozialistische Weltrepublik!*

*[‘Workers, farmers, take your rifles, take your rifles in your hands!  
Smash the fascist army of robbers, set every heart on fire!  
Plant your red banners of labour in every field, in every factory.  
Then will rise from the ruins of the old society, a socialist world republic]*

### **Eisler/Weinert/Busch, 1930<sup>2</sup>**

*The Communism of my childhood was universalist .... Communism, like medieval Christendom, was one and indivisible, an international fellowship of faith .... Internationalism was not an option but a necessity of our political being, a touchstone of honour and worth. It dominated Party work in the trade union and labour movement .... Communism was a world outlook or it was nothing. It owed its existence to the Soviet Union, but as an international solidarity it extended to the furthest corners of the earth [...] Internationality also framed our notions of social justice .... It was ... a source of inspiration in struggle [...] Marxism, or what we called Marxism, reinforced this cosmic sense. It dealt in absolutes and totalities, ultimates and finalities, universals and organic wholes. It also claimed jurisdiction over every dimension of experience, every department of social life.*

### **Raphael Samuel (1985)<sup>3</sup>**

*[I]ssues to do with the nature, structure and possible transformations of society in an era of radical historical change both in practice and in theory have attracted emancipated Jews disproportionately almost from the beginning, starting with the Saint Simonians and Marx. This fits in with that understandable Jewish proclivity to support movements for global revolutionary transformation, which is so striking in the epoch of the Marx-inspired socialist and Communist movements. Indeed, one might say that Western Jews of the earlier 19th century were emancipated thanks to an ideology [Liberalism - PW] not associated with them, while the Eastern Ashkenazim largely emancipated themselves through a universalist revolutionary ideology [Marxism PW] with which they were closely associated.*

### **Eric Hobsbawm (2005)**

# Point of Departure

I would have loved to start this book with something like the first chapter of the autobiography of the British anarchist, Stuart Christie (2004). This is entitled ‘The Worst Day in My Life’, and is about being tried by a military court in Franco’s Spain, with death by garrotting hanging, well, around his neck. Indeed, I would have loved to have had something like his captivating book title, *Granny Made Me an Anarchist*. However, I can’t recall the worst day of my life, though witnessing the Soviet invasion of Prague, August 20, 1968, was certainly one of them (others may be mentioned in passing). And it was not my grandmother who made me a Communist, it was my parents. They were inspired not by Soviet invasions but by the Russian Revolution and the international promise of the first state in the world to describe itself in universalist rather than national terms. The ‘Union of Soviet Socialist Republics’ does not even refer to *Russia*. It means simply the Union of Socialist Council Republics – which, it was implied, anyone could join ... or *leave*?

## East End, My (Parental) Cradle

I was born in London in 1936, the year scheduled for the People’s Olympics in Barcelona, an event cancelled by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Some of those who went to this left-organised alternative to Hitler’s Olympic Games stayed on in Spain to join the International Brigades. A disproportionately high percentage of Jews were members and there was even a Jewish company, named after a Polish Jewish martyr of revolutionary struggle.<sup>4</sup> This act, that war, however, represented both the zenith and nadir of the nineteenth century tradition of democratic and socialist nationalism and internationalism. Most of the *brigadistas* had no idea of the role in the Civil War of Soviet state interest (nor of what was later done to the Soviet and East European volunteers).<sup>5</sup> These facts are more than coincidental. My parents were Communists, my mother working as a secretary for various international solidarity committees, including one of aid to Spain, and my father shortly to become General Manager of the best-known Communist bookshop chain, Collet’s.<sup>6</sup> Dad used to bring copies of the Communist *Daily Worker* from London to our wartime evacuee home in Northamptonshire. ‘Why is it called the *Daily Worker*?’ we would ask. ‘Because it comes out daily and it’s for the workers.’

My parents were not only Communists, they were also Jews, my mother born into a shopkeeper’s family in London’s East End, my father an illegal immigrant from Poland. To be a Jew, poor, an atheist and a Communist meant to belong to a cosmopolitan and internationalist tradition, including Marx, Luxemburg and countless other ‘non-Jewish Jews’ (Deutscher 1968) or ‘rootless cosmopolitans’. Tarrow (2005) prefers to think of them as ‘rooted’, something I will return to at the end of this work. It also meant a double marginalisation from a then very English Britain. But, as Deutscher and so many others have since recognised, the position of the stranger is one that sensitises as well as isolates (explaining the high proportion of rational Jewish sociologists, seeking to understand society, as well as of crazed Jewish revolutionaries, seeking to blow it up).

We – my older brother, David, and I – grew up during and after the Second World War in different and changing surroundings that even my child’s mind recognised as such.

There was the East End Yiddish culture of my mother’s parents, known to us as Booba and Zeida rather than as grandma and grandpa. I was somewhat confused about their surname, which was

alternately Shatitsky and Gold ... which would have made my grandmother Golda ... *Gold*? I think, however, my grandfather was always Menachem. Behind the drapery shop in Stepney Green there was an incomprehensible life, lived at the top of its Yiddish voice, dramatic and exotic, though completely unreligious. There was an Uncle Yankel (the fat one with the bowler hat) and an Esther-Soora (who laughed, cried and sang), *kichele*, much sighing and *schrei*-ing.

*Kichele* were my grandmother's home-made biscuits, and I would have preferred an English ginger nut any time. But Booba seemed to believe that they were special, especially since, given wartime conditions, the almonds had to be extracted at home from plum stones. Maybe Booba felt that by eating something with a Yiddish name we would gain or retain something Jewish. She tut-tutted over our total ignorance of Yiddish, of which we learned a few words only as a necessary accompaniment to Jewish jokes.

As for a *schrei*, this is just a Yiddish shout or scream. Like Yiddish sighs, of which Booba was a notable exponent, these had, of course, special qualities. Behind them lay hundreds of years of minority and migrant catastrophe (*Gevalt!*), and of impotence in the face of such. This childhood experience, of a poor, immigrant and discriminated community certainly remained with me as my own parents moved from the East End to the North West of London, from the classical petty-bourgeoisie into the modern middle-class, inclining me to hold on to an identification with those enrolled 'amongst the sons of toil'. Toil was the lot of my grandparents, who never seemed to have a day off or to take a holiday. My identification downwards was, of course, accompanied with guilt about the comfort and educational privileges we enjoyed. As a precocious and obsessive reader, I identified with *The Family from One End Street* (a working-class family in which the daughter has to help her laundress mother), and many land miles away from *Swallows and Amazons* (with upper-middle English kids messing about in boats).

There was, during the war, plenty to sigh and *schrei* about as fears, rumours and terrifying photographic evidence (unsuccessfully concealed from us) arrived about what Hitler was doing to the Jews in occupied Europe. Many of our East End family had also been bombed out, most of them had sons in the army, one at least returning badly injured and my mother's brother mentally scarred, if not broken.

My grandfather was living proof that you can be a Jew and still fail at business: he was known in the warehouse as 'Mr Half-a-Dozen'. He could have been the character answering the phone in the Jewish joke:

'Hallo, is that Mr Rothschild?'

'Oy! Have you got the wrong number!'

Yet this unassuming and incompetent shopkeeper had had the desperation/courage to shoot himself in the foot so as to get out of the British Pioneer Corps in the First World War, something I boasted about –to my mother's acute embarrassment. As for my parents, well, they were both Communists, but one was an Eastern Marxist one, the other, I guess, a Western Liberal one.

## **Alec, the East-European, Extrovert and Talmudic One**

My father, Alec Waterman (as he eventually came to call himself), was born with the surname Nasibirski in Błonie, outside Warsaw, 1907. Nasibirski, I was given to understand, was actually a

Russian curse: 'To Siberia!'. A lasting effect of the French Revolution, or Napoleonic invasion, on the Russian Empire seems to have been the idea that everyone should have a registered surname. Jews (like contemporary Icelanders) had only patronymics. Alec's family name was of the kind supposedly given to Jews who failed to pay Czarist officials adequate bribes. Alec's father was a smallholder, a bone-crusher and carrier (carter?). Alec later recalled the smell of the human shit the family had to use to fertilise its piece of land. His peasant background was revealed to us during the war when he cut a potato into four, planted it, and magically grew whole round potatoes from the quarters. From the age of three till ten Alec attended *cheder* (Hebrew religious school). As a youth he became first a Zionist, later some kind of Communist. He worked, presumably in Warsaw, as a baker and jeweller. At the age of 19, in 1926, he was working in Danzig (since 1945 Gdansk again) as a docker.<sup>7</sup>

In this same year he stowed away, followed by his friend Alf Holland, intending to go to South Africa. Arriving in London as an illegal immigrant, he had an introduction to the parents of the schoolgirl who was later to become his wife. Alec first worked as a cutter and machinist in the clothing trade. When he married Ray he was unemployed. Later he got his own haberdashery. He adopted the name Wasserman (from distant family, a name at least more Western than Nasibirski). During the 1930s-40s Alec was successively or simultaneously a member of the British Communist Party, of its National Jewish Committee, of the (Jewish) Workers Circle, of the Friends of the Soviet Union in Stepney, of the Yiddish Workers' Theatre Movement. He applauded the creation in the Soviet Union of Birobidjan – the Jewish Autonomous Region – intended to be Stalin's final solution to the Jewish Question. There was an increasingly strong connection at this time between being Jewish, speaking Yiddish, being specifically working class or generally poor, trade-union activism (in the clothing and furniture trades), having Stepney roots, being a Communist and, of course, being pro-Soviet.<sup>8</sup>

Alec eventually became a member of the ASSET trade union (managers and administrative staff) and wore its badge. As a stateless person in the UK, he was registered as an alien during the Second World War, required to report weekly to the local police. He did duty in the Auxiliary Fire Service. From 1942 to 1952 he was the General Manager of Collet's Bookshops. When some serious dispute obliged his resignation, he attempted unsuccessfully to get a job 'in the movement'. But he was turned down for Secretary of the British-Polish Friendship Society. Alec eventually had to settle for a shop in Hendon, selling lamps and decorations. This at least permitted him to continue with his political activities and occasional foreign travel. Together with old comrades and friends, he tried to revive the tradition of the Left Book Club, with People's Books. This produced some good titles in the mid-1950s, but the project never took off. During the war Alec was involved with the visit to the UK of a Soviet Jewish delegation, making propaganda for the Soviet war effort. Amongst the visitors were Jewish cultural figures, later victims of Stalin's paranoia. After the Second World War, Alec obtained a British passport. This registered his place of birth as Poltava, possibly because this was in Russia, Britain's wartime ally. From around 1948-49 he began to visit Eastern Europe, including East Germany/German Democratic Republic, for the Leipzig Book Fair, Russia and Poland itself. As a Yiddish-reader and speaker he had contacts with Jewish Communist organisations, publications and friends in the Soviet bloc, Western Europe, the US and Israel (where his two remaining siblings lived and which he first visited around 1951). He was also one of the British delegates to a (Communist) World Peace Council conference in Warsaw. Alec was heavily involved in the crisis that broke out in the British Communist Party, particularly amongst its Jewish members and its national Jewish committee, following the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956. Alison Macleod reports how the reformist Poles had permitted the official Yiddish-language paper, *Folksztyme*, to

publish an account of Stalin's anti-semitism:

A few days later it landed on the mat of Alec Waterman .... Ray, who had been seeing him off to work from the first floor, heard him cry out in the hall below. She looked down and saw him reel back against the wall, very pale. Holding the paper in his hand, he exclaimed, 'So it's true!'. (Macleod 1997:80)<sup>9</sup>

Whilst Ray and his close Jewish Communist friends, Professor Hyman Levy, Chimen Abramsky (previously a bookseller, later a professor of Jewish history)<sup>10</sup> and others left the Party, and whilst yet others simply toed the party line, Alec spent the following period atoning for his previous acceptance of Soviet propaganda about the Jewish Question.<sup>11</sup> In this he was prepared to collaborate with people he would previously have dismissed as anti-Communist. Whilst Jews moved out of the East End and into the middle class, and the Jewish presence in the CPGB declined, Alec became a leading figure in both the Workers' Circle and the national Jewish Committee of the Party. The Jewish Question continued to rumble within the CPGB into the 1960s. Srebrnik (1995:162) records that:

Alec Waterman, who was editor of the [Communist] *Jewish Clarion* from 1953 to 1956, was 'too loyal' to contemplate quitting the party, according to [Ray]. None the less, he became increasingly critical of Soviet attitudes: he published an article 'On the Jewish Question' in [the CP journal] *Marxism Today* in 1959 which charged the USSR with responsibility for the 'unjust and illegal acts involving the complete elimination of all Yiddish cultural activities after 1948'. Just before his death in April 1966, he completed a critical memorandum on Soviet Jewry, which the CP's executive committee attempted to conceal.

Alec died, without warning, from a massive stroke. It was natural for us to put this down to the stress suffered after he discovered that his revolution had been betrayed. He re-appeared in two semi-autobiographical novels later written by Ray. He also appears, under his fictional name, Morris, in an interview she did for a collection of Jewish women's testimonies (*Jewish Women in London Group* 1989:25-47). It is something of a blessing that Alec did not live to see Poland made almost *Judenfrei* (Jew-free) by the Polish Communists rather than the German Nazis (Banas 1977).

Whilst General Manager of Collet's, Alec used to bring home much 'proletarian literature' from the 1930s US. These were Communist-inspired and/or New Deal-funded books and magazines – dealing with the lives of workers, Negroes or *Jews Without Money* (Gold 1930). We also had *Emil and the Detectives* (Kästner 1971) from a mysteriously non-Nazi Germany, and Soviet calendars showing happy and heroic figures – the man in male-superior position – atop electricity pylons. Alec sang: not only Yiddish but British music-hall, folk and international Communist and labour-movement songs. Amongst the latter were those from the little red songbook of the Wobblies, the anarcho-syndicalist *Industrial Workers of the World* (1973-1909). Written in the USA around the turn of the century, when the US working class was largely immigrant, often rebellious, sometimes pacifist, these songs were usually based on well-known tunes borrowed from the Salvation Army. They were also full of class-hatred, irony, disgust at popular religion's 'pie in the sky when you die', and utopian hope. Given the virtual disappearance of anarcho-syndicalism as a competitor with Communism, and given their easy singability, we could just as easily adopt them as part of our tradition and culture.

Alec never totally mastered English, occasionally mixing his vees with his wubbleyoos in speech,

and getting Ray to check his articles for the Communist press. He remained emotionally attached to Yiddish language and culture all his life. From him we inherited a love for Jewish humour. He hardly talked to us about his background or family, even before he knew for certain that both family and community had been removed from the face of the Polish earth. So I didn't know what a *shtetl* (Jewish settlement) was till I read Sholem Aleichem and Isaac Bashevis Singer. Alec was a convert from talmudic Judaism to talmudic Marxism. I was unable to handle my father's emotionally-violent Communism, even before I began to qualify my own attachment to it. It was, therefore, as a conscious act of personal reconciliation, as well as out of a sense of political responsibility, that I joined him in yet one more unsuccessful campaign to get the British CP to take a clear public stand against Soviet anti-semitism in the early 1960s.

## Ray, the Introspective, Moderate English One

My mother – who looked as Jewish as my father looked like a chubby East-European peasant – was much more English in temperament and culture. She was, until the British CP Congress that followed the Soviet one, a convinced but un-fanatical Communist, being deeply marked by English ideas of tolerance and fairness. She could not, in any case, understand a socialist doctrine separate from its implications for humane personal behaviour. She didn't even like my father telling us British anti-Nazi jokes, from the wartime press, that were actually 'funny foreigner' ones. Mum was a great admirer of a British Communist type: the self-educated working-class intellectual. She had worked with and was very attached to the Scottish ex-miner, Willie Gallacher, one of the Communist Party's few Members of Parliament, who was himself insistent that Jewish Communists remain part of their community and culture. Ray was also a remarkable representative of the British Protestant work ethic, never having stolen a pencil or a minute from an employer. An avid reader and a would-be writer from childhood, she trained as a secretary, doing a series of low-paid or voluntary jobs, many of them for Communist-controlled or Communist-inspired international solidarity committees (Spain, Soviet Women, the Rosenbergs).<sup>12</sup> She was thus remembered by Alison Macleod (1997:41):

Two days before the execution of the Rosenbergs, a rather timid lady, Ray Waterman, stood up in the Strangers' Gallery and shouted to the House of Commons: 'The Rosenbergs are innocent!' She was seized and taken down to the crypt by two policemen. Her husband, Alec Waterman, followed, crying: 'Don't you hurt her!'.... They explained to her that she would have to stay in custody until the House rose. It might be an all-night sitting. Ray said she didn't mind; what was that to the fate of the Rosenbergs? A policewoman had to be called to sit with her. Ray apologised to the policewoman for making her do extra work.... The House rose by 1 a.m. and Ray was released into the arms of her husband. By being imprisoned for several hours (and without a trial, too!) Ray became a legend. She does not now like to be called a heroine, but there are still old Party stalwarts who think of her as one.

After we had left home, my father and her parents had died, and she had herself retired, Ray achieved her ambition, publishing two semi-autobiographical novels and a number of short stories. She also provided interviews and recollections for a fascinated and admiring younger generation of Jews, socialists and feminists – not to forget Jewish socialist feminists.

The two novels are *Family of Shopkeepers* (Waterman 1973) and *Beginning Again* (Adler 1983). The first is about growing up in the Jewish East End between the wars. I call it, after an early such title, an 'East End, My Cradle' book. The second is set after the Second World War and deals with a woman's attempt to write, despite the demands and distractions of a household including her parents (uprooted from the East End), her war-shocked brother, a largely-absent Communist husband, and two boys approaching puberty. For fear of (further) provoking some noisily-offended relatives, the latter work was published under the pseudonym of Ruth Adler. Given that it was only after she had been freed of her husband, her sons, her father (whom she took into her small flat after her mother died), I found it ironic that *Beginning Again* was dedicated to 'my menfolk: the living and the dead'. I also thought, given her quotation from Nadezhda Mandelstam (wife of a persecuted Soviet poet), that it should have been called 'Ordinary Heartbreaks':

To think that we could have had an ordinary family life with its bickering, broken hearts and divorce suits! There are people in the world so crazy as not to realise that this is normal human existence of the kind everybody should aim at. What wouldn't we have given for such ordinary heartbreaks!... (Mandelstam 1971)

As for memoirs, these are in the section on the Yiddish Workers' Theatre Movement (Waterman 1985) in a book co-edited by our childhood friend, Raphael Samuel. An interview can be found, entitled 'Ruth Adler: Woman of the Eighties' (Jewish Women in London Group 1989:25-47). The introduction to the latter, by interviewer Ruth Swirsky, provides more detail on her life:

Ruth Adler was born in London in 1912, months after her parents arrived from Poland. When Ruth was still a baby, her mother took her to Warsaw to visit her family and they were unable to return to Britain for the duration of the First World War. She spent her early childhood with her mother's family, living a traditional, orthodox Jewish life, speaking only Yiddish. She returned to the East End of London when she was seven and, although her family were not observant, she grew up in an almost entirely Jewish environment. In the 1920s, despite steady migration out of the area, there were still between 100,000 and 150,000 Jews living in the East End.

Although Ruth attended a Jewish elementary school, this did not protect her from pressures to assimilate. The aim of Jewish mainstream communal organisations, including Jewish schools and Jewish youth clubs, was to turn young Jews into good British citizens. The use of Yiddish was not allowed and Ruth, like other young Jews, soon abandoned her mother tongue. After leaving school, her intellectual and social horizons opened up when she attended the Progressive Youth Circle, which was part of the Jewish Workers' Circle [...]. Through her activities at Circle House, Ruth was exposed to a range of radical political ideas and in the late twenties she joined the Communist Party.

In later years when her children were growing up and her parents becoming increasingly dependent on her, Ruth, like so many women, was torn between family and political commitments. The revelations about Stalinism after Stalin's death were deeply traumatic for many members of the CP. Ruth, like many of her comrades, left the Party in 1956 but her socialist politics have continued to be central in her life.

In the early-1990s, my partner, Gina Vargas, a Peruvian and international feminist, did a long

interview with Ray, which was eventually translated into Spanish but never published (Vargas 1991a, b), though I still have the English transcript of this. Gina, whose mother was a conventional middle-class Catholic one, had endless admiration for Ray, particularly for her late-in-life love affair with the working-class John, an intelligent and very gentle man – and a good-looking bloke to boot. When Gina asked why she and John had not married, Ray said, ‘I want a lover, not a husband’. But when Gina probed about the sexual aspect of the relationship, Ray avoided any reply. I don’t know why, since she had separately informed my ex-wife, Ruthie, and another woman, that it was good in bed too.

Oddly enough, bearing in mind her working life and political activities, Ray, like Stuart Christie, seems to have never considered herself an ‘internationalist’, turning down my offer to interview her under this rubric in her old people’s home. I guess that she held to a solidarity ethic that stretched from her personal life to her work and political activities, regardless of spheres or borders.

Ray (Rochele to her parents) was neither a doctrine-preaching nor a street-marching feminist, but she grew up in the wake of first-wave feminism, as a socialist, and she fought the good fight against the usual roles assigned to Party wives and mothers by their doctrine-preaching, street-marching husbands and sons. And she certainly provided a role model for younger feminists on how to become a great-grandmother without losing emotional or intellectual and artistic vitality. My mother’s internationalism continued after she broke with the Party, keeping up contact with the banned (and pro-Communist) South African women’s leader, Lilian Ngoyi<sup>13</sup> for twenty years after hosting her for a few days in the mid-1950s. She also played a role in rescuing from Communist Poland the most successful Soviet agent in wartime Europe.<sup>14</sup> I recall, age 20 or so, my mother remarking to me that I was more interested in ideas than people. It was not meant as a criticism, but it was certainly no compliment. It was only later that I came to appreciate her combination of Jewish, socialist, English and liberal, personal and political convictions and attitudes. Her lightly fictionalised piece about the two South African women who had stayed with her and Alec, on their way back from an international Communist women’s congress and tour (Adler 1960), reveals how she experienced and communicated her Communist internationalism. The story involves not only Ray and Alec, Lilian and her friend but the Egyptian Mimi (see below) and even David and I, who were not even in London at this time. It thus allows the South Africans to exchange their experiences with their British hosts, but also for the crossing of other geographic, ethnic, class and generational borders.

To the despair of my mother (who obviously had to do ninety percent of the housework), our kitchen was always bursting with tenants, and with visitors speaking heavily-accented English, Yiddish or French, telling of old and new horrors, arguing loudly, violently and endlessly about Russia, Communism, Israel, Zionism, anti-semitism – as well as about books, art and film. Many years later my mother asked me whether I had had a happy childhood. ‘No’, I replied, after reflection, ‘but it was certainly an interesting one’.

## **Growing up Communist and Internationalist**

We grew up during the war chanting ‘Open the Second Front!’ (i.e. in Europe, which the UK and USA were deliberately postponing), ‘Free India Now!’ and ‘They Shall Not Pass!’. There was a worldwide struggle between Red Communist Revolution and Black Nazi Reaction. Britain could go either way. On VE (Victory in Europe) Day, 1945, David, our schoolfriend Raphael Samuel and I went out at night to join the celebrations, to be anxiously sought by my father and his uncle, Chimen Abramsky, fearing

we might get beaten up by British fascists! Victory in Europe evidently did not mean Victory in Britain. Out walking on Hampstead Heath with a dozen other kids from school, several years later, my class was confronted by a couple of working-class truants who, with unerring skill, identified us one after the other: 'Yid, English, English, English, Yid, English ...'. It was a menacing and humiliating experience.

Seeing the dramatic postwar spread of Communism, however, we had no doubt that the future was on our side. Aged 14 or 15, I told the Labour Party mother of a schoolfriend that there would be a revolution in Britain within five years. Her response to this fortunately erroneous prediction (one of many made by Communism and Communists) was to give me Wolfgang Leonhard's *Child of the Revolution* (1979/1952), a quietly convincing and horrifying account of what was done to his German parents and himself as German Communist refugees in Stalin's Russia. I instinctively adopted the correct Communist posture, returning it after reading the first disturbing chapters, with the ominous words 'I am not going to believe this book'. I preferred, obviously, the CP's copious pamphlet literature about the triumphs of Communism in Eastern Europe (Kartun 1950) and its struggles internationally (Bell 1941).<sup>15</sup> In 1950, aged 14, this is how my Communism expressed itself in a school essay (spelling and punctuation preserved):

Late in June 1950, fighting broke out in Korea. U.N.O. voted that the Americans had a right to move in and protect their interests in South Korea. At the end of July the Americans were being driven further and further South.

Nehru Prime Minister of India, opened talks with Stalin and Stalin said he would tell the communists to withdraw from Korea if China would be admitted to the U.N. Security Council. America replied by saying that if the N. Koreans would remove their troops from Korea they would open negotiations. After two weeks all the N. Korean army had withdrawn to the U.S.S.R and the Americans moved into Korea with a very strong army. Further negotiations were opened and the Americans went back on their promise and refused to admit China to the U.N.

Stalin gave a speech telling the Communists of the world to arise. There were revolutions in France and Italy and in a week Communist governments were set up France and Italy attacked Spain which was defeated and also became communist. In 3 weeks the whole of Europe was overthrown and war was declared between the 60 United States of America and the Union of Communist Europe and Asia.

India, Persia Iran and all of Africa were neutral. England, Australia and New Zealand were among the New States of America.

Russia who was expecting the war had every body evacuated into the steppes a few hours before the H bomb was dropped on Moscow the whole city was blown flat and close on a million people were killed, when a hydrogen bomb planted in the vaults beneath the White house exploded over 5 millions were killed, the Americans did not mind if the workers were killed.

In February 1951 the cease fire was ordered and the two ruling signed a peace pact and the 3<sup>rd</sup> World war was over.

If, with such an exotic and dramatic background – and with such ideas – school didn't seem a totally bland or alien environment, this was because the two we went to were both private, progressive co-

educational ones, with relatively high proportions of Jewish and foreign children. The main difference between Jewish and non-Jewish boys was between Roundheads and Cavaliers (the headwear of the two sides in the English Civil War evoking the different shapes of our tiny but proudly-compared pricks). We were, in any case, growing up as English middle-class boys, involved in football, puns, intense friendships and hatreds, Marx Brothers' movies, and girls – deliciously close, frustratingly out of reach. These were, moreover, the wartime or early postwar years, in which it was easy to see the world in terms of the struggle between democracy and fascism – with democracy as best represented by the Soviet Union. One radical and one Communist history teacher encouraged my interest in social history and the Paris Commune. British Communists were largely responsible for the strong national tradition of working-class history, from which I learned that internationalism had nineteenth century British roots. Even outside history class I was able to express my apocalyptic, revolutionary, power-political worldview. I was tapped on the shoulder for my punctuation and over-simplification of world wars rather than my juvenile Communism.

I liked to think of our school as being in elegant, ageing and intellectual Hampstead rather than in brash, *nouveau riche* and suburban Golders Green (where it actually was).<sup>16</sup> King Alfred's was not totally immune to the Cold War. Around 1950 the school got the Communist *Daily Worker* out of the school library, using the transparent and shabby device of removing all newspapers. Even the Hampstead parents were junking their prewar, orange-covered, Left Book Club editions at school jumble sales. And as the bright, brash neon, motorcar and Coca-Cola tide swept up the hill from Golders Green, apathy swamped the pupil-elected School Council.

I now increasingly felt myself split between a parochial world of schoolbooks, country-dancing and cricket, and the 'real world' outside: the squatting of disused barracks, dock strikes, Polish war films, the Chinese Revolution, the Korean War, the Mau Mau in Kenya (which we Communists understood as some kind of European wartime resistance movement). At home we received American technical magazines that the Russians were unable to order direct from the USA. This lent Communism a further aura of clandestinity. Alec went to Moscow for Collet's and came back with stories of streets miraculously planted overnight with fully-grown trees. That nature could be mastered and miraculously transformed by a combination of Communist politics and modern technology was a notion that had a powerful grip on our imagination. Ewan MacColl, who otherwise played a respectable and respected role in labour movement culture and the folksong revival of the 1950s and 60s (Samuel, MacColl and Cosgrove 1985), wrote a ballad that went in part:

Oh, Stalin was a mighty man,  
And a mighty man was he-e-e.  
He led the Soviet people  
On the road to victory-y-y.  
All through the revolution  
He fought by Lenin's si-i-de  
And they made a combination  
Till the day that Lenin die-e-ed.

Having reproduced the Soviet practice of airbrushing Trotsky out of the Revolution, he went on to make Stalin a mythical folk hero, clearing mountain ranges, joining mighty rivers by a wave of his hand, and then planting the biggest crop the 'world has ever se-e-en'. That nature could be mastered and miraculously transformed by a combination of Communist politics and modern technology was a

notion that had a powerful grip on our imagination. A major stimulus to this was Lenin's declaration that 'Communism equals Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country'. The notion that communism could create dustbowl ten or twenty times worse than the US one portrayed in the film of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* was inconceivable to us at that time – and possibly even to enemies of Communism.

It must have been around 1951-52 that the first Soviet movie went on general release in British cinemas, this being 'The Fall of Berlin'. Projection began with an announcement from the cinema chain that it dissociated itself from the interpretation offered. Not surprisingly, since the film begins with two characters, who I will always think of as Sasha and Masha, being separated in Moscow by the beginning of the war and then meeting again at its end in Berlin. The reunion takes place in front of Stalin, who descends in a white suit from a silver plane that had magically found a rubble-free Berlin airport on which to land and to hand out his Christ-like blessings.<sup>17</sup> The profoundly religious symbolism here offended our sceptical teenage sensibilities. But not to any dramatic degree. Other reminders of war, exploitation and persecution were all around us.

Filled with dread and discomfort, we met French Jewish orphans who had survived the holocaust. France was 'abroad' and French lessons the key to its mysteries. In Paris I met Bella, an old family friend, a Polish Jewish woman whose blond hair had enabled her to act as a courier for the resistance. I slept on the floor at Bella's, though she was not too happy when I did this with my first real girlfriend. Hitchhiking South, I was caught by two not-so-comic gendarmes as I carved 'Liberez Henri Martin' (a hero of French Communist struggle against the war in Vietnam) on a tree. I wept secretly over the Nazi occupation, the concentration camps and the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Why had I not been there to fight – or die – with the heroes and martyrs? We went to the Everyman Cinema in Hampstead to see French and Italian movies informed by a totally different sensibility to British and American ones. Communism was a mass force in these countries. In the 1950s our Third World was within hitchhiking distance. Which is why I thrice hitched there, with friends, through Paris and down to the Mediterranean. I was drawn moth-like to the drama and violence of life abroad – including the cosmopolitan USA portrayed in the proletarian literature and left magazines of the 1930s and 40s. I told no one that when I dreamed of foreign countries it was not of the Soviet Union but of the super-modern USA of Hollywood. My other recurrent dream, however, was of killing or being killed by Nazi soldiers.

In the meantime, however, heroic things were being marginalised in Britain by the growth of the welfare state, reconstruction, more-or-less full employment, and the beginnings of the long boom and a fully fledged consumer capitalism. This later got consumer-populist expression in the words of the Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, 'You've never had it so good!'. But consumer capitalism would not have been something I recognised, being rather more attached to the Left Book Club and such titles as Allen Hutt's *This Final Crisis* (1936), or Spanish Civil War martyr Christopher Caudwell's *Studies in a Dying Culture* (1947).

## **The Young Communist League, 1951: 'All My Life and All My Strength'**

I joined the Young Communist League on my fifteenth birthday, January 26 1951. This was more or less the peak of the Cold War. Our parents had been reluctant to let David and I join, having heard

rumours of extra-curricular sexual activities within Hampstead YCL. These, unfortunately, were quite untrue. The Hampstead YCL, moreover, was by no means full of Hampstead intellectuals (or schoolkids). The majority would have been from working-class South and West Hampstead. Amongst them were an engine-driver, a railway worker, a butcher and low-level clerical workers. At an open-air meeting at Whitestone Pond a British fascist screwed his Iron Heel into my sandaled foot. On a (Communist) Five-Power Peace Pact march, they flung paint at us, whilst the police chatted quietly on the opposite pavement. McCarthyism was creeping into British public life, the trade unions and Labour Party. Yet our conviction and determination were unbounded. I must have spent the equivalent of at least one day a week for and with the Party, whether at meetings, demonstrations, socials, classes, selling papers and pamphlets, going to East European movies, or on holiday with the YCL. As a middle-class Jew on the North London streets, I could be called a 'Dirty Yid' or physically threatened by working-class kids. I could even suspect whispers behind me from our respectable Hampstead neighbours in Chesterfield Gardens. But within the Party I never heard an antisemitic or other racist remark, felt protected by the best of the British working class, and even in some way appreciated. If I was accused of anything it would be of 'petty-bourgeois liberalism', the accusation frequently coming from a petty-bourgeois Communist who was certainly no liberal. I, in my turn, would adopt the strategy in dealing with others: I desperately wanted to be working class and – and therefore – politically correct. Or was it that by being politically correct one became working class?

The Party and 'the movement' became my family, my club, my church, my country, my universe. It also belonged in my mind to the wartime tradition of guns, bombs, sacrifice and heroism.<sup>18</sup> Joining the YCL we got membership cards printed with words from a Socialist-Realist Soviet novel, variously entitled, in English, *How the Steel was Tempered* or *How Heroes are Made* (Ostrovsky 1937). I memorised the phrase and repeated it to myself endlessly:<sup>19</sup>

Man's dearest possession is life, and since it is given to him to live but once he must so live as not to be seared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past: so live as to have no torturing regrets for years without purpose: so live that dying he can say – all my life and all my strength were given to the finest cause in the world, the liberation of mankind.

Despite the customary patriarchal form here, there was a rough and ready egalitarianism between the boys and the girls in the YCL. I suppose the girls did most of the tea-making. They certainly did the actual crying 'the day Stalin died',<sup>20</sup> whilst we explored our feelings, swallowed lumps in our throats and kept our upper lips stiff, manly and English. A Communist girl could easily demonstrate, however, that she was as good as a Communist man (although not, presumably, as Communist or manly as Stalin). I guess that when we wanted to discriminate we would accuse them of being petty-bourgeois rather than female. 'After the Revolution', we would joke, 'the men will have all the babies'. This quip is so rich in ambiguities that it would take some time to sort them out even today. The egalitarianism, such as it was, made it difficult for me to start something sexual with a YCL girl. I fell in silent, hopeless and miserable love with several of them instead.

## **The Berlin Youth Festival, 1951: Tearing the Curtain, Embracing the Enemy<sup>21</sup>**

In the summer of 1951 I went to the first of my four World Youth Festivals, this one in East Berlin. It was some adventure for a 15-year-old, just four or five years after the war. It was also a unique and confusing experience, though in those days of cast-iron certainties, *confusion* was something Communists did not discuss or even admit to themselves. Berlin was a mess of bombsites and swirling sandstorms. I envied my older YCL friend, Monty Johnstone, translating for an East German leader of the official youth organisation just outside Friedrichstrasse Station.

One of my responsibilities on this trip was to pass from Alec to someone in East Berlin an enormous multi-functional pocket-knife, originally presented to Frederick Engels by, I think, some Sheffield trade unionists. Stalinallee (two years later the site of the first major East-European worker uprising) was under construction in bombastic Soviet wedding-cake style. Almost every adult we saw had been involved in Nazism. How could I possibly tell the (ex-Nazi? ex-SS?) doctor who gently and efficiently treated my infected and swollen ankle that it was a Jewish one? The young Germans were in blue uniforms, marching under the blue and gold banners of the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* to the music of brass bands. They sang a song that we irreverent and undisciplined Brits (who couldn't even agree to wear a uniform of grey trousers and white shirts) called the Bow-Wow song:

Bau Auf! Bau Auf! Bau Auf! Bau Auf!  
Freie Deutsche Jugend, Bau Auf!  
(Wir Bauen).

'Build-up! Build-up! Build-up! Build-up! Free German Youth, Build-up! (We're Building)'. Not all the songs were so desperately lacking in imagination or appeal. One that was translated into English and widely sung by us in the UK went:

Go home, Yankee. Yankee, go home!  
We don't want you any more.  
For the way of life you sell,  
Doesn't suit us very well,  
And you'll never make us fight  
A Yankee war.

When anti-Communist leaflets fluttered down from West Berlin, FDJ zealots grabbed them out of our hands. As I 'helped' them, I stuffed one into my shirt so that I could have it translated and judge it for myself at home. Without telling even my brother David I broke ranks and went by U-Bahn two stops into Capitalist, Neo-Fascist, Warmongering West Berlin. I noted oranges in a stall at its entrance. But in 1951 West Berlin was not yet much of a *wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle). I had forgotten to get a return ticket with my Ostmarks and it was a long, hot and dusty walk back. Raphael, who had been on the train from Britain held up in the American Zone of Austria, turned up late, haggard, and dying for a (western) cigarette. He, David and the third of their Three Musketeers at KAS, were into long trousers, cigarettes, Brylcreemed hair and flashy ties.<sup>22</sup> Was Raph the guy who stole my box of 50 duty-free Craven A, cigarettes that I had deliberately failed to hand over to the East German comrades (ostensibly for resistance or concentration camp survivors)? It seems that even at 15 I was a suspicious little bugger. And I was also one not as prepared for self-sacrifice as my tearful repetitions of Ostrovsky suggested. When the loudspeakers in the canteen of the Humboldt University called for volunteers to return early so that the heroes of that train could stay longer, I sat, sweated and

suffered – but only until I found the obvious, if sneaky, solution, by walking out of the hall and thus putting it all behind me.

We hugged the squat, shockingly made-up and bemedalled women singers from the North Korean army, currently locked in war with British working-class soldiers on the other side of the world. We learned and sang Bert Brecht and Hans Eisler songs, in improvised German, from the backs of trucks taking us to sports stadia or cultural performances. There was the *Moorsoldaten* (Peatbog Soldiers), about the pre-war concentration camps, and the ‘Solidarity Song’ which ended with the cry *Solidarität!*

This felt wonderful. I might have been English, Jewish and middle-class but I was also a member of an international community of classes, nationalities and races. We were joined indivisibly by a pathetic Youth Festival song that began,

One great vision unites us, Tho’ remote be the lands of our birth,  
Foes may threaten and smite us,  
Still we live to bring peace to the earth.  
Every country and nation  
Stirs with youth’s aspiration,  
Young folks are singing,  
Happiness bringing,  
Friendship to all the world.

(Chorus):

Everywhere the youth is singing freedom’s song,  
Freedom’s song, Freedom’s song...

Brian Hammond, a proletarian South London Jew who knew some German (or at least Yiddish?), carried internationalism with the Germans further than I did. He actually got himself a fuck, pointing to the proof on the fly of his trousers. I was simultaneously amazed, disgusted and deeply envious. The possibility of any gap between his statement and his evidence never occurred to me. Brian was, however, not the only one who had broken ranks more dramatically than I had. Dennis Hill (later, as we will see, my colleague in Prague) had done likewise (Hill 1989:21-24). It was a long train journey for us back, this time through Czechoslovakia. During one night the train crawled through Prague, so I was able to obtain a blurry-eyed view of the castle that dominates it. We were sustained on our way home by a train compartment full of East European salami, bread that grew successively more stale, and bottled mineral water. We ended up tossing the sausage to farmworkers in France.

Back at King Alfred’s School, the adventure of the half-dozen of us young Communists, breaking through the Iron Curtain, was a matter of some admiration on the part our French teacher, the wonderful Ros Ryder-Smith. I was even able to mount a little self-constructed classroom exhibition about this, using my mother’s typewriter. This was evidently the beginning of my career as a journalist, layout man ... and propagandist. I note, however, that this exhibition did not include my own personal adventure in West Berlin, nor the fact that I had had to conceal my anti-FDJ leaflet from the zealots. One sheet reads literally as follows (ideology and punctuation unfortunately preserved):

**WESTERN PROPAGANDA**

The Americans, British and French are badly frightened of the growing strength of the Frie Deutsche Jugend, growing, not only in the D.D.R. but also in the West.

So the Americans using their propaganda forces, as well as their police to their best to prevent the F.D.J. from carrying on their work. When strong arm methods fail they try to discredit the Jugend by telling lies about them in the West. They also tried to disrupt the smooth working of the festival by dropping forged tickets to shows from an aeroplane.

Other methods they use include dropping leaflets which ask members of the F.D.J. various questions. These leaflets xxxx I have seen myself and they are so clumsily as to have no strength whatsoever. It is surprising to see that the F.D.J. do not pick these up to read them but when the leaflets float down they are grabbed at and torn up. The dropping of these leaflets does not tend to make the American any more popular.

Within a year or so I was a leading 'schools activist' and one of perhaps a hundred or so of the more active members of the 400-strong London YCL. At school I was one of the six in our YCL Branch – all children of Jewish members of what the Party called its Commercial Branch. But, at the same time, I was in charge of a 'brigade' within Hampstead YCL, this being some kind of cell within the branch. We tramped the streets, trying to track down YCL dropouts or get them to pay their dues. I began to speak on street corners. On one occasion, on Kilburn High Street, we staged an argument between the speaker and a passerby. Unfortunately, we were exposed by a BBC man with a foreign accent who loudly denounced us as reproducing a trick used by Communists in pre-war Czechoslovakia.

I walked freely past the doorman at the Party's King Street headquarters and was on at least nodding acquaintance with both YCL and Party leaders. We plotted successful Communist strategies for the annual conference of the schools' organisation of the UN Association, the Council for Education in World Citizenship. On one occasion, and to our delight, the Polish ambassador had turned Cold War propaganda around by saying there was indeed an Iron Curtain, one between the rich and poor in the (capitalist) world. We had, of course, no knowledge of or interest in the CEWC other than as a platform for propagating Communism. But the Conference had considerable press coverage, most speakers were from the Conservative, Colonial or NATO establishment, we were well prepared, widely spread throughout the hall, sold a lot of copies of our papers, and made publicity for the coming World Youth Festival. But I infuriated the YCL General Secretary, John Moss, a man with seriously negative charisma, when I said on a bus back to King Street, that we should either stop combining YCL with Festival propaganda or complaining that the Festival Committee was called a front organisation (which it was). I was hauled up on the other side of his King Street desk and given a dressing down. This to the private amusement and admiration of my friend Monty, then editor of the YCL weekly, *Challenge*.

## **School is Dead! Long Live ... er ... College?**

I left my reduced and boring class of six, with whom I had spent what felt like all my life, to finish my schooling in the more plebeian, bracing and adult atmosphere of Regent Street Polytechnic in Central London. Here I met socialist Israelis, Pakistanis, Nigerians and Americans. I was in the University Entrance Department, in a street directly opposite the main entrance of Selfridges on Oxford Street.

For a whole year I was therefore confronted with an effigy of the Elizabeth who would be Queen, mounted on a white horse on the Selfridges canopy. Also in this crammer were working-class Londoners, one an East End taxi-driver. There was also Louise, a middle-class Jewish girl from a suburb called, amazingly, Surbiton, who had actually got a Ford Popular car from her father as a birthday present. At this time, I think, my father might have just about got his first car, something he at least needed for his work. But Louise, whose father must have come from the East End, had never seen that part of London, so I took her there to balance the effect of the car. Another student was a seriously neurotic American Jew, who had two surnames, being called alternately Sam Wolf or Sam Doktorczyk. Sam long made fun of my Communist attachments, about which he showed a suspicious familiarity. His father was into international trade exhibitions of some kind, and Sam turned up one day with a tin of Russian crab, which he announced would be a prize for the best political performance by the two or three Communist students in the department. As a result of the activity mentioned below, I won this prize. And also the admission by Sam that he had been at least a fellow-traveller, and had actually taken part in the historic US Peekskill Concert, with Paul Robeson, at which police had allowed mobs to beat concert-goers and stone their buses and cars.

This is how I got the tinned crab. I took part in a demonstration against the execution in the US of the Rosenberg 'atom spies'. It was not easy to get arrested here, but I was angry, frustrated and determined. In the same mood, presumably, Ray got herself ejected from the House of Commons. I was fined 40 shillings – rather more than the value of a tin of Russian crab. The legal execution of the Rosenbergs was acutely felt at home. They were, after all, a middle-class, leftwing, Jewish couple with two boys. It would have been hard to find a family more like our own. My grandfather's response was that if they did give the secret of the bomb to the Russians, they should get the Nobel Peace Prize. It was what we were all feeling, although none of us would admit that the Rosenbergs might have been guilty as charged. Any full-blooded Communist would have been prepared to lie and spy for the Soviet Union and the inseparably linked World Revolution. If I never felt tempted to do this, it was, I suppose, because I had faith in the possibility of *convincing* people of the superiority of Communism. During the war my mother had been approached by someone she knew from the Party or one of its fronts who apparently wanted to recruit her into a Soviet spy ring. She turned it down, presumably for similar reasons ... thus saving us from becoming some English equivalent to the Rosenberg boys? The day the Rosenbergs were executed, the brilliant cartoonist of the French CP daily, *Humanité*, did a cartoon of President Eisenhower, entitled 'His Famous Smile', showing him with a mouthful of electric chairs.

## **Bucharest Youth Festival, 1953: Failing to Humanise Communism**

In 1953 I had my second Festival experience, as a delegate from Hampstead YCL, though I had then to beg and scrape from family and family friends for my own Festival fee. This was in Bucharest, a lot further east than East Berlin. And this time I had managed to borrow a tiny pinhole camera, with which I took tiny pinhole photos of a railway trip that must have taken three or more days. David had decided to hitchhike to Bucharest, with an ebullient Swiss Communist *au pair*, Jeanine. Jeanine had earlier disturbed a Willesden YCL camp, somewhere on a small river outside Watford, by taking off her top and displaying her magnificent (I had no comparative reference here) breasts. Ray had disapproved of David's adventure, fearing that it could lead to some kind of 'misunderstanding'. My

understanding was that it hadn't, but David turned up a couple of days late in Bucharest in any case. I had myself teamed up with Simon, the schoolfriend whose mother had tried to educate me about the Soviet Union, and, also, with an older guy, with whom we had earlier had the idea of buying a secondhand van and driving to Bucharest. He, fortunately, took good photos.

I was not, at 17, daring enough to make a sexual approach to Miriam, a Romanian Jewish girl, but we nonetheless had adventures, trying unsuccessfully to get into, first, the British movie of Laurence Olivier's 'Hamlet', then into a performance of an Israeli (Communist) folk ensemble. At the second, I was impressed and appalled that an uncontrollable crowd – presumably of Romanian Jews – had actually pushed in the whole glass front of the theatre. We sweatily withdrew. As for the attempt to see 'Hamlet', this also had to be abandoned. I wrote this up for *Challenge*, in what I thought was a very nice story entitled 'Piata Romana'. The square or plaza was the site of the university faculty in which the British delegation was quartered. I thought I had written a nice personal experience of this political event. Australian Robin Corbett, then Deputy Editor of *Challenge*, ticked me off in detail for my distorted presentation of socialist Romania. And this despite my silence about the hysterical Romanian Jewish demonstration! Robin left *Challenge*, edited a farming magazine, joined the Labour Party, became an MP and ended up as Baron Corbett of Castle Vale. When, however, he left the CP, I did not resist the temptation of quoting to him his dismissal of my naïve adolescent Communist journalism.

But why had I never even considered submitting my piece elsewhere? Simply because the Party formed the horizon of my aspirations. In any case, there was a war on between socialism and capitalism worldwide, and Communism was in the frontline of this struggle. So why would I offer it to some enemy or even a fellow-travelling publication? It now occurs to me that 'War Communism' was not simply a period of Soviet economic and political history, it was in the very nature of Communism as a Marxist-Leninist party (Samuel 1986:93, 111-3). Communism was rather good at insurrection and warfare, which is why it attracted radical-nationalist movements in what later came to be called the Third World. What it was not good at was peace and liberal democracy. On the other hand, the British CP was *castigated* by Comintern representative Manuilsky as 'a party of great friends' (Samuel 1985:34). And I had great friends within its ranks.

Despite this snub, I had a number of other pieces published in *Challenge*, mostly whilst I was doing my journalism course, 1954-5. These were under such titles as 'History Lives in London's Grimy Streets Today' (June 5, 1954), 'The Yanks Get Their Own Way in Guatemala' (July 10, 1954), 'Beware! They Want to Fool Us into Rearming the Germans!', 'Thousands Protest at Nazi Arms (Deal?)' (early 1955).<sup>23</sup>

A more-successful attempt to humanise Communism, or at least popularise the Festival, was a film made by the British Youth Festival Committee, using as a narrative device the relationship between two British Festival participants, Charlie (I seem to recall) and Anita. The actors were two young British Communists, Charlie being a Scot, Anita a Londoner. These were also their real names. They were not, however, presented as Communists but as Youth. We were envious of their participation in the movie, and lusted after the dark and beautiful Anita, actually a member of the Hammersmith YCL. We endlessly imitated Charlie, who had lost her and kept saying, in an infinitely imitable Glasgow accent, 'Ah hud te faind Anita!'. At a London social where the film was first projected, I had two notable experiences. The first was dancing the Romanian round-dance, the *perenitsa*, and having a thread from my unique and expensive heavy-knit sweater pulled out about 12 inches. The second was having filmstar Anita opt for me in the circle around her, kiss me – which was a required part of the

*perenitsa* – and slip her tongue into my mouth. A shaft of lightning shot down to my groin. This kiss was not only beyond the traditional requirements of the dance but outside my experience – even my knowledge. After the social, only one thought was in my mind: ‘Ah hud te faind Anita!’ But that shocking erotic gift had, regrettably, meant more to me than to her.

## **Failing to Revolutionise Adrienne**

So my first sexual experience and relationship was not with Anita from Hammersmith but a pretty coffee-coloured girl from what was still colonial British Guyana. I had been active in the ‘Hands Off Guyana’ campaign since the British Government had sent the Bigbury Bay warship there so as to intervene in the election victory of the Communist-led and radical-nationalist People’s Progressive Party in the first democratic elections. I had even seen its leaders, Dr Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham, bounding up the stairs at a *Daily Worker* rally.

My relationship with Adrienne was not eased by political sympathies. This first relationship was a difficult one, mutual sexual inexperience and anxieties aside. We were both about seventeen or eighteen, but this was 1954, and a decade or so before, for example, the clitoris was discovered. Well, rediscovered really, since it was perfectly well known to Victorian pornographers. But I had to pluck up all my courage to buy what were then universally called French letters (*Lettres Anglaises* to the perverse French). Moreover, they cost money, and I think my total pocketmoney then was fifteen shillings a week. This was supposed to cover transport, cups of tea, the occasional cinema ticket and support for the Party, and had no identifiable element for condoms. I slept with Adrienne at home in a three-foot-wide divan that was actually getting too small even for me. Ray approved, saying she would rather we did it at home in the warm than outside in the cold and rain. She even asked me whether I was using contraceptives, to which I mumbled the required response.

Things would have been easier for us if my pocketmoney had been increased to take account of my new life circumstances. Adrienne had been sent to boarding school in England from British Guyana, suggesting that her parents must have been wealthy. She went on to do photography at a technical college – something for which she had less talent than I. But she was rhythmic where I was ... arrhythmic? ... later having trouble even with marching in step in the army. She was light in colour, wore what would decades later become an Afro hair-do, and had what I would only afterwards realise was a great arse. She got a lot of attention from men, sending me into paroxysms of jealousy and anxiety. These only increased when she told me she had been deflowered in his car, in Brighton, by a commercial traveller. Although around this time I was reading Graham Greene’s *Brighton Rock*, as a set book in my journalism course, I failed to see Adrienne’s experience as having any related qualities. Adrienne, moreover, was unable to cry during our many crises, whilst I was unable to prevent myself doing so. I was therefore greatly moved when, on one occasion, a single tear ran down her cheek.

We had met at a YCL social, and I dragged her to one such event after another. Summoning up reserves of resistance, she insisted I went to see modern dance (Martha Graham?), and to the Malatesta Club, an anarchist cellar in Holborn, where the lampshades consisted of x-rays. I had no sympathy for either of these self-evidently petty-bourgeois activities. And I could not tolerate the fact that Adrienne was not a Communist, or even that she was an independent human-being. I was determined to impose my will on her, much, I suppose, as we Communists were going to remake the

world in our own image.

## Training to Become a Journalist (Revolutionary)

I had no academic inclinations at all, wanting only to get out and make the increasingly-overdue revolution (my five years were running out). I wanted to be like Peter Fryer, a reporter on the Communist *Daily Worker*, who was also a member of Hampstead YCL. His experience during the Hungarian Uprising, 1956, later turned him from Communism to Trotskyism. Even later he became a well-published writer and a major historian of black migration to the UK (Fryer 1984).<sup>24</sup> Peter was a chubby, dynamic, friendly, working-class Northerner who regretted he had not himself been able to go to university. He did not convince me that I should. At the end of my university entrance studies, 1954, I had turned up in the afternoon for a morning history exam, the subject I was best in. I had had my relationship with Adrienne weighing on my mind – or some other anatomical part. So I thus disqualified myself anyway for university entrance. And whilst Ray tried to encourage me to re-sit my history exam in the following year, I really had no desire to do so. I was a terrible examinee. Nor, for that matter, did my imagination have any place for university. No one in our immediate family had ever gone to one.

Instead, I did a one-year journalism course at Regent St Poly, 1954-55, editing and running up a very worrying debt on the student paper. Ours was really a low-grade technical college course. Our major lecturer was a one-time sub-editor from some Glasgow newspaper, who, since he always stank of peppermint, appeared (and behaved) as if he had a serious alcohol problem. Our English teacher actually told us that ‘the working class is the working class because it is not intelligent enough to be the middle class’. In his spare time he wrote Westerns under some such name as Waldo Frank. He had us, however, working through some serious contemporary novelists, including the earlier-mentioned Graham Greene. Our shorthand and typing teacher was, presumably, a one-time secretary, who helped us cheat so that her exam results wouldn’t look too bad. I never learnt shorthand but I was on my way to typewriting competence – perhaps the most valuable effect of this course. We also did some politics, and press law. We had to go out once a week to find some news, mostly in the courts, and then turn this into newspaper stories.<sup>25</sup>

With my own ambition to become the editor of *Challenge* or the *Daily Worker*, I taught myself layout, and got recognition for this. There were one or two halfway progressive students in the course, but no Communists. So I had to make do with the first militant conservative I had ever met, the vivacious Jackie Litherland, whose father was a self-made Midlands businessman. During one political argument, Jackie actually slapped me in the face. But it later turned out that this was just a slap on her way into the National Union of Journalists, the left wing of the Labour Party and, finally, the Communist Party. Jackie was and is a big-hearted Romantic Englishwoman, becoming a poet, a journalist and union activist, falling dramatically in and out of love, and remaining as talmudic about Communism as my father. We and our families became long-time, though usually longdistance, friends, with Jackie actually living at my parents’ place whilst I was away.

There was no significant student movement in the UK in the early 1950s, so our little bunch of cosmopolitan Communists and fellow-travellers could easily dominate the Student Union, the tiny office of which became our meeting place. But we couldn’t get the students to buy the paper I was editing. And when a non-Communist Irish nationalist we had put up for union President turned coat

and mobilised the otherwise apolitical Engineering Department, they drove us back into the margin we so richly deserved. I was Branch Secretary of our Communist Party branch in the Poly for one or two years. This was really a thankless task, given the mood in the Poly and in the country. Two of us ganged up on a fellow-travelling girl student, Jean McCrindle, who had actually been at my wartime school. But when she refused to join, breaking down in tears, my fellow bully, Neil, handed me his Party card and walked off also! This might have been, at this point, the Worst Day in My Life. I had once got into some heavy petting with Jean when we were coming home, both totally pissed on vodka, from a reception for socialist students at the Soviet Embassy. Jean sobered up the day after. I remained intoxicated.<sup>26</sup>

## **Dazzling International, Communist and Sexual Vistas**

Whilst at the Poly I wrote, as mentioned above, one or two items for the YCL paper, *Challenge*. These were on foreign issues. There was the piece on the British intervention against the PPP government in British Guyana, 1953. And another on the US-engineered coup in Guatemala one year later. I never became the editor of *Challenge* nor even a reporter on the *Worker*. Instead, aged 19, without a university education, and definitely wet behind the ears, I landed myself a journalistic job in the international Communist movement.

This was on the nomination of the Party, which was looking for a replacement for Alan Brown, a *Worker* reporter, as English Editor of *World Student News*, the magazine of the Prague-based International Union of Students. Given the semi-clandestinity with which the Party sometimes liked to play, I was not allowed to tell anyone about this, apart from my parents. I was bursting to announce it to the world, but had to repress this extraordinary, adventurous and prestigious appointment. In the absence of any IUS affiliate in the UK, the Party nominated UK staff to the IUS (as it would have, behind the scenes, if there *had* been such an affiliate). Tony Goss, a nice guy, then Secretary of the National Student Committee of the Party, told me that I had to do not so much an application for the job as an autobiography for the Party.<sup>27</sup> This gave me considerable heartache since I did not want to do so much Communist self-criticism as to disqualify myself, nor too little as to do likewise. I finished my first-ever, two-page, political autobiography like this:

My main faults, I think, can be listed as follows: Quick temper. Tendency to get worked up. Tend to take all responsibilities myself. I am told that I am hyper-critical of people.

On the other hand I think that when faults have been pointed out to me, I have recognised and tried to correct these faults. [...]

I think that my work so far should be seen as 'education' rather than anything else. At the Poly I made a great many mistakes due to inexperience but I think that I now understand and have largely corrected these.

Oh, *really* ... ?

The Party approved my appointment but required me to attend a school on imperialism before I left. Although I was again bursting to go and had no inclination at all to do a third Party school, this did give me the opportunity to meet Ben Bradley, one of the British accused in the Meerut Trial of Communist unionists in India 1929-33.<sup>28</sup> When, in 1980, I told some Indian student Marxists that I

Had Known Ben Bradley, their mouths fell open as widely as they might if I had said I had drunk lemon tea with Lenin. Whilst I was attending this school, however, my parents phoned to say that my call-up papers for the British Army had arrived. We decided that the letter should remain unopened until I had packed and left for Paris, where I would have to wait for my Czechoslovak visa. The army could then be informed that I had left the country without having seen the letter.

I said goodbye to Ruth Loshak, a Jewish Communist student at Cambridge for whom I had fallen heavily even before she and my brother David had ended their short relationship. I had written to Ruth, telling her how torn I was between going to Prague and staying in England with her, but knowing full well that I was opting for Prague. I would have been rather more torn if she had wanted me to stay. Hurtfully, she said it was a wonderful opportunity, I should take it and that she wished me good luck. We were to meet again at the Warsaw Youth Festival that summer, but though I was still very interested in her, she clearly had never been much in me. And, anyway, she was a little beyond and above my reach, being a university student, reading Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* with her Cambridge Party Branch, and even beating me at table tennis – the cruellest cut of all. Ruth graduated in, I think, mathematics and got involved in early computer development. She married a South African Communist guy I knew, the brilliant economic historian, Charles Feinstein. I recall her as leaving the Party after 1956.

Alec wrote me a letter in which he compared his youthful departure for the West to mine for the East. Bearing in mind the different circumstances of our departures, and the different world I was moving to, I found this a little stretched. Ray came down to see me off at Dover, whilst I was chafing to break the parental bond. She also asked whether I didn't need to buy some condoms, which suggestion I, embarrassed, stupidly turned down. And then she gave me money to buy my first ever camera, a second-hand 35mm Kodak with bellows, which had to be focused by guesswork. My first photo was, therefore, an out-of-focus one of a tiny Ray waving me off on the cross-channel ferry to France.

In Paris I stayed – luxuriously – on the Avenue de la Grande Armée, in the apartment of Dino Castro, a former tenant of my parents when we lived in this huge house in Hampstead. Dino was an Egyptian Jewish would-be composer, whom I recall as later writing the music for some epic movie. But at this moment he was re-typing handwritten applications for subscriptions to *Reader's Digest* in French. Dino had been a somewhat brooding presence in Hampstead, where he was giving David piano lessons. I also recall him as looking like an equally brooding Beethoven, if somewhat darker.

Since I had practically no money, and my visa kept on not arriving, I didn't feel too comfortable in this place. Fortunately, Dino had visitors one day. These were two Egyptian girls, one being a nice intelligent Jewish Communist girl, the other being the totally gorgeous and exotic Mimi. I ignored the comrade, who actually seemed interested in me, and fell immediately in lust with the a-political beauty. But I was going east and they were going west. I wrote David that I was sending him Mimi as a farewell present, but he had no more luck with her than had I or our Communist upstairs lodger, Alan. Mimi went on to marry an Egyptian diplomat who at some time represented his country in the Philippines.

Other adventures in Paris? Taking 'neo-realist' photos with my new camera – photos much admired when I showed them later to student friends at the Prague Film School. Losing my cheapo watch, which I really needed for catching trains. Then seeing one on the pavement and reaching for it at the same time as David (whose surname I forget), the CPGB representative to the IUS, passing through Paris. David already had a watch but said we would sell that Western one in Prague, and split the

proceeds, so that I could buy a cheapo Soviet one (he never did, which may explain why I have forgotten his name). Going with the two Egyptian girls to see Fellini's heartbreaking 'La Strada', I had to distance myself from it by telling them he had abandoned his previous social realism.

Having finally collected my visa, I made my way to Brussels, where I had five minutes to change trains. This was with a loaded rucksack and an enormous travelling bag. In the train a ticket collector charged me for some mysterious supplement, leaving me to recover my breath with only the ten marks or so I had for six hours between trains in Germany. Knowing little more than 'peace and friendship' in German, I had to risk leaving my baggage in the left luggage whilst I went into town to buy myself some oranges and a loaf of bread for what I thought would be the next 24 hours. The centre of Nuremburg, 1955, consisted largely of single-storey prefabs, filling wartime bombsites. But any further indications of the past were being replaced by the booming consumer capitalism. The camera shops broke my would-be photographer's heart.

On the train to Prague a friendly, English-speaking, Czechoslovak trade representative looked with amusement at the enormous loaf of bread I had bought ... *for a six hour trip?* His expression turned to alarm as I photographed the border fortifications from the train. Then we arrived in Plzeň (Pilsen). My heart sank into my Jesus sandals as I watched a horde of grey-faced, expressionless and loden-green-coated passengers filling the equally dismal platforms. Wartime London had not prepared me for such a depressing scene. Nor had Berlin, Bucharest or Warsaw, possibly because my field of view was full of festival participants, costumes and ideology. This, too, could have been one of the Worst Days of My Life, if it hadn't been for the dazzling international, Communist and sexual vistas I had projected onto the horizon of Prague, a city I had glimpsed at night from a train four years earlier.

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<sup>1</sup> For a historically-specific and differentiated account of British Communism, during the period that my parents and I were members, see Morgan, Cohen and Flinn (2007). It is based, amongst other sources, on a massive questionnaire and more selective in-depth interviews. Its section on internationalism (2007: 210-29) is particularly pertinent to my own experience.

<sup>2</sup> This sounds infinitely better in the German original. It comes from a moment in which Communist utopianism and insurrectionism were fired by brilliant artists. From 'The Secret Deployment', Eisler/Weinert/Busch. See and listen: <http://eislermusic.com/reviews/derheim1.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Raphael/Raph/Ralph (1934-96) will appear in this work in various guises and possibly under various of these momentarily-preferred names. He was a childhood friend during the Second World War, a schoolfriend (and founder of our school Young Communist League branch) around 1951, my social history lecturer at Ruskin College in the early 1960s. He then wrote this three-part study of British Communism (Samuel 1985, 1986, 1987. I cite from these though the study appeared, much later, in book form as Samuel 2006). My last recollection of him was a phone call in the Netherlands, circa 1990, which ran like this:

???: Peter, you remember when we went to Cornwall and how impressed we were by ....

Me: Is this ... err ... Raph?

Him: Yes, well, you remember, those incredible waves, the cliffs, the storms ....

Me: Raph, what is this about?

Him: Well, I am writing this piece about the Left and Nature ....

Me: No, Raph, I don't remember having those feelings at all. I was just a normal ten-year-old kid. I do remember *you* having these feelings, but I am afraid you can't project them onto me.

Despite his unceasing attempts to recruit people for his changing enthusiasms, and his not uncommon failure to complete projects

such as this one, Raph's account of British Communism remains for me the one that best evokes its vicissitudes, and places it within the context of British working class and socialist history.

<sup>4</sup> See Gerben Zaagsma (2015) as well as his website <http://gerbenzaagsma.org/>, and the archival record by Martin Sugarman <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/spanjews.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Their independent military and revolutionary experience often led, under Communism, to isolation, imprisonment, torture or death. The matter is a sub-theme in Andrej Wajda's cinematic monument to the relationship of workers and intellectuals under Stalinism, *Man of Marble*.

<sup>6</sup> Founded by the wealthy Quaker Communist, Eva Collett Reckitt. I remember the Hampstead house and the Sussex cottage mentioned in this declassified archive. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/releases/2003/november14/reckitt.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Much more about Alec's family background can be found in the biography of his favourite sister, whom we later got to know as Yola. The biography was written by her son (my cousin), the Israeli journalist and novelist, Igal Sarna (2010). He also suggests that after the Second World War, when Alec was still a Communist and anti-Zionist, he had rather more of an identification with Israel than he ever revealed to us. It is to be hoped that Igal's little gem will be translated not only into French but also English. Even more can be found in archives I received just days before dispatching this book to the publishers. See Chapter 10, Footnote 31.

<sup>8</sup> Much of the activity of Alec himself and of his closest friends and comrades, 1939-45, can be found in the work of Henry Srebrnik (1986, 1995). Oddly, he refers to Alec not as Wasserman, but as Waterman, the name he only adopted in the 1950s. The book is, nonetheless, a fine piece of social history and, for that matter, social theory. It provides rich detail of a moment, a place and the phenomenon he identifies, simply, as 'Jewish Communism'. Srebrnik, referring to Ray, notes that much of Alec's own archives had been lost. The book reveals the identification of East End Jewish Communists like Alec with not only the Soviet Union but also Republican Spain, with a new Poland free of anti-semitism, and even with a Jewish or bi-national Jewish-Arab state in Palestine (1995:121-7).

<sup>9</sup> Macleod's participant-observer account of what happened in the CPGB between the death of Stalin in 1953 and the Hungarian uprising of 1956 makes numerous passing references to both Alec and Ray.

<sup>10</sup> Bookselling was his day job. He was also a historian of the First International (Abramsky and Collins 1965). When Chimen eventually died, in his nineties, 2010, he – and a house I always remember – got a lovely obit from Sasha Abramsky, one of his grandsons. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/jan/01/sasha-abramsky-chimen-abramsky>.

<sup>11</sup> My old friend Gavin Williams and I both insist that the other invented the notion that a 'Question' for Marxists is something for which they don't have an answer: the Jewish Question, the Woman Question, the National Question ....

<sup>12</sup> In the aftermath of the US discovery that it no longer possessed a nuclear monopoly, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were accused of passing its secret to the Russians. An imaginative evocation of the case – if not the son involved – is the *The Book of Daniel* (Doctorow 1971), which I recalled as having a chapter, 'Growing up in Cold War America'. On rediscovery of remaindered copies, 2005, I found that it was just a section and that the chapter was entitled 'Alone in the Cold War with Franny and Zooey' (161-79). Still impressive. I bought two copies of the book. The Rosenberg boys survived the trauma, 'came out' in the stormy 1970s (Meeropol 2003), and one of them still runs a Rosenberg Fund for Children <http://www.rfc.org/>. Even the grandchildren publicly acknowledge their heritage, something I find both reassuring and admirable.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/lilian-masediba-ngoyi>. Lillian appears as Marion in this article by Ray (Adler 1960):

One day I asked Marion a question that had been on my mind for some time.

'I have some South African friends, white people. Some of them say that in South Africa, Jews behave much better than non-Jews to Africans. Others say they are just the same. What do you say?'

'They are just the same...There is no difference. You should see those rich Jewesses, with their big breasts all covered with jewels!'

I didn't like that at all [...]

I found myself telling Rosa about my parents' youth in Poland, the bleak poverty and anti-Semitism which had driven them to seek a better life in England, their early struggles here, and my childhood in the East End of London. Later, through the influence of a teacher, through the novels of British and American writers, I had come to see the hope which Socialism offered to all poor and oppressed people.

'But your boys,' said Rosa, who had listened intently, 'they were not poor. They had good lives, good homes. How did they

become Socialists [i.e. Communists? PW]?’

‘...I suppose it was because in their home they saw and heard about the battle going on against all kinds of injustices...I think it was their sense of justice that made them become Socialists; their sympathy with all whose lives are spoilt by the way things are now’ [...]

[...] Marion said this: ‘I used to hate white people for what they have do to us Africans. But first I met the white people in my country who are helping us to free ourselves, and then I went abroad, and white people where we went welcomed us with flowers and embraces...I have learned so much here. I talk about you wherever I go. We are such – friends – no. That is not the right word...’

‘Sisters...?’ I offered.

She shook her head. ‘I would like to find a word, a word which would explode like dynamite because it had hit the right thing. There isn’t such a word.’ She sighed[...]

‘When I get out of the plane,’ said Marion, ‘I will lie down on the earth with my stomach pressed against it, so that Africa shall know I am back.’...

And then,’ she said, rising, ‘I will get up and say: Baas, here comes trouble! That’s me!’

It was one o’clock. We had to be up at six.

We filled our glasses again, and stood up, and said all together:

‘Mayibuye Afrika! Africa, may it come back during our lifetime!’

<sup>14</sup> This was Leopold Trepper, a brilliant Polish-born Soviet agent in pre-war Palestine, who became the leader of one of two rings that the Nazis called the ‘Red Orchestra’ during the Second World War. His network of Communist and Socialist resistance fighters was considered by the Nazis to have cost them many divisions. The Red Orchestra was discovered by the Nazis, Trepper was arrested but eventually escaped and joined the French resistance. Immediately after the war, Trepper returned from Paris to Moscow, where he was rewarded for his efforts by imprisonment that lasted till after the death of Stalin in 1953. Later offered the choice of remaining in the Soviet Union or returning to Poland, he chose the latter. He became active in the Jewish Communist community, which is how he met my father. After the second major wave of Communist anti-semitism in the 1960s, he decided to emigrate, whereupon the Polish regime accused him of having himself betrayed the Red Orchestra to the Nazis. His Socialist and Communist friends in the West, fortunately, declared their total trust in him, and the Poles finally released him. He ended his life as a citizen of Israel, an outcome of the Zionism he had been earlier sent to spy on. Those who were prepared to die for the International Revolution too often found this rosy abstraction had an all-too concrete form under regimes that were prepared to kill for the Nation State. Around 1968, in Copenhagen, I had the surreal experience of watching a TV serialisation of Trepper’s life with his wife and his son, Michael Brojder (whom I knew from when he had visited the UK from Poland). They kept up a chorus of snorts and comments, though I thought it a rather friendly portrayal. See further Trepper (1977), Perrault (1970) and <http://www.marxist.com/oldsite/germany/postscript.html>. Trepper stayed with my mother on first arrival in the UK. And an illustration in one of the books reproduces her address. Trepper was one of a generation of Soviet international/ist activists-cum-spies, many of whom were later imprisoned, tortured or killed by Stalin. One of them, known originally to me in England as Henry (aka Ernst Henri, Semyon Rostovsky) is mentioned in Chapter 2. Another, I only recently discovered, was a ‘Red Reporter’ of the civil war in Spain, Mikhail Koltsov [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail\\_Koltsov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Koltsov). Like Trepper and Henry, Koltsov was a Jew.

<sup>15</sup> Bell’s *Pioneering Days*, was just one of a series of similar heroic and romantic titles, such as *Those Stormy Years* (Hardy 1956) and *Breaking the Fetters* (Stewart 1967). All three were British proletarians and union activists who had become Communists and been involved in activities of the Communist International. Later accounts by internationalist British Communists with experience in the Communist world have been less heroic, though no less fascinating (Riordan 2009) or droll (Sayle 2011).

<sup>16</sup> A quite extensive account of KAS in my time there appears in an autobio of Robert Corfe (2011). I have only seen this on Google Books, thus with pages or sections missing. And I was totally puzzled by the account until the author mentions that he was previously known as Nigel. My memories of a seriously untypical, upper-class, uniformed and strange classmate, must be weighed off, however, by his extensive memories of staff, other classmates, and of the leftism (compared with his rightist background) and informality of KAS and its staff. His memories do not always match my own. And his story of the removal of the *Daily Worker* from the library is either mistaken or simply incomplete. I do not either recall any ban on red shirts or on senior pupils wearing shorts (which I did till I left aged 17). But he remembers the school Communists, particularly Raph Samuels, the fierce Debating Society and, despite getting details concerning my father wrong, he also remembers the Wasserman/Waterman boys. He includes a half-dozen photos.

<sup>17</sup> I discovered, 2013, that these were not Sasha and Masha but, actually, Alyosha and Natasha. Oh, and also that Natasha was granted by movie Stalin the privilege of kissing him, though this was on his bemedalled chest rather than his mustached face. The discovery was made possible by a TV film I caught late one night, subtitled ‘Shostakovich against Stalin’ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0218711/>. The former, accused of ‘formalism’ and expelled from the Soviet association of musicians, had been coerced into providing the matching music for the bombastic film. What I further discovered, having failed to note this on first

Young Communist viewing, is that the Stalin figure descending from the plane (to be greeted by the occasional concentration camp survivor, and French partisan, as well as a mass of Soviet soldiers) was totally expressionless, more like a totem than a human. In hindsight this seems appropriate, as well as a safe strategy by the poor actor who had to play the part.

<sup>18</sup> Raph Samuel once said to David that whereas he himself would resist fascist torture, David would not. Fortunately, none of us was ever put to the test, so we were never able to find out which of us would have given way faster. I later discovered there are few predictors for such heroism. Actually, David had a stubborn streak and might well have resisted longer. Raph himself was highly strung and panicked by, I mischievously discovered, a flipped snake skin.

<sup>19</sup> I am apparently not the only person who recalls this. On searching the web to find a version that matched my vague memory, I discovered it quoted by Communists, the African National Congress, and in places as widespread as Lancashire, South Africa, India and Australia. Sometimes a line or two is added. My favourite version credits this romantic, revolutionary, priestly and self-sacrificial declaration to Fyodor Dostoevsky! <http://www.gnostics.com/newdawn-2.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Title of a disrespectful story by the now-ex-Communist writer, Doris Lessing (1957). This appeared in one of the two journals that later merged to become *New Left Review*. From what I recall of it, the point of the story was to show how life in England continued its routine course despite the earth-shaking news on the radio. I shared a platform with Doris Lessing once at a CP cultural conference. I was desperately in love with her, as a beautiful mature Communist woman writer. But I was also desperately in love with the equally beautiful and mature Simone Signoret of the film *Casque d'Or*, especially because she was on the Left. I clearly wanted to be relieved of my virginity by a woman who was beautiful, mature, famous and, if possible, Communist.

<sup>21</sup> For an academic's overview of the Festival and its significance, see Kotek 1996:189-99, 1998:291-304. Whilst in conflict, in some details, with my observation as a 15-year-old participant, Kotek reveals the extent to which this event was shaped by the Cold War, and to what extent it was confronted by attempts in West Berlin to attract East German participants. For further accounts of this and later festivals, see Bresslein 1973, Krekola 2002 and Rutter 2013a,b). For a British Communist activist's account of the festivals in later years, see Stevenson (2004). Apparently, preparations for these in the UK became increasingly fraught, as CPGB control slipped and the CPGB and YCL themselves became themselves disorientated. Stevenson details this in relation to the festival in Havana, 1978.

<sup>22</sup> Sixty years or more later, Peter Seglow, third of the musketeers, assured me, whilst on a visit to Lima, that he was not actually into Brylcreem.

<sup>23</sup> This record is not only partial but possibly incomplete. I had mounted these pieces on pre-glued paper which had, in the following half-century become more or less fused together. I have been able to separate these to some extent. I also note that whilst most of them were signed 'Peter Wasserman', the last items – when I was seeking a journalistic job – were signed with the pseudonym, 'Peter Allan'.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Fryer died in 2006. He had a remarkable itinerary and it is much to my regret that I didn't restore a relationship with him after I had myself left the CP.

<sup>25</sup> One day before my nineteenth birthday, January 25,1955, I got my chance to combine political, professional and romantic concerns by taking part in an impressive CP-sponsored protest against German rearmament. I had to write up the story for *Challenge*, as mentioned earlier. One-time student Communist, Peter Sedgwick (1971), remembers this event, and reminds me of the ambiguities of Communism in the 1950s: both its capacity to mobilise a rather wide constituency of protest on major public issues and the problematic bases on which such Communism rested.

<sup>26</sup> Jean, who later actually joined – and left – the Party, wrote up her own response to the Hungarian Uprising. I was a little pissed that although listing a whole number of Communists (including the famous Raph), she did not say sorry for her earlier rejection of me and, well, *us* in the Party Branch. (McCrindle 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Fifty years later I discovered that this was a Soviet and – therefore – international Communist practice, with such autobiographies being sometimes detailed questionnaires, used not simply for security purposes but for 'cadre development', as well as in inner-party conflicts and purges. In the CPGB at this time they seem to have been reduced to something of a formality (Morgan, Cohen and Flinn 2005).

<sup>28</sup> I knew, of course, many more prominent British Communists, hundreds of them listed in a compendium of Communist biographies/obituaries (Stevenson 2004-?). An examination of these will give even sceptical readers an impression of the quality,

variety – and longevity – of British Communists, as well as of their intimate relationship with the rest of the British labour and progressive movements. For an in-depth study of some British Communists, including those who went to the Soviet Union (and were sometimes disappeared there), see McIlroy, Morgan and Campbell (2001).

## CHAPTER 2

# Czechoslovakia 1955-58: From Agitator to Agent

*It was all very well for London [the British Communist Party] to hope that I could 'keep an eye' on the young editor but this turned out to be not at all easy .... The new editor was called Peter, a lad of 19.*

*He was volatile and rather brash .... It was a delicate task and rendered almost impossible by the English editor's inability to see the name of the game .... Matters were not helped by the fact that my colleague quickly made it clear that he wished to distance himself from the British group .... Whereas the rest of us had frequent contact, shared our meals, did our drinking and partying together, our editor 'went native' and submerged himself into the circle of Czech friends in the film-school and other student circles.*

(Hill 1989: 268-9)

## The International Union of Students: Vanguard with a Decreasing Rearguard<sup>1</sup>

The World Federation of Trade Unions, the International Federation of Democratic Women, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the International Students' Union, the International Cooperative Alliance, and many other international bodies, united millions of working people of all countries of the world. For the first time in history, an international movement of peace supporters has been created – a movement unprecedented in its mass nature, and which is becoming ever more strongly organised. The Communist and Workers' Parties – the most consistent fighters for national independence and freedom for the peoples, for peace, democracy and Socialism – are working tirelessly to consolidate and extend the democratic mass organisations, seeking to achieve their all-round activation, to enhance their fighting qualities, and to give correct orientation to their activity. (*For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy*, May 25 1951. Cited Clews 1952:28)

The WFDY and the IUS were the only two international youth organisations to be recognised by the United Nations .... Controlled as they were by the Communists, this meant that from 1945 to 1950 the representation of young people at the international level was a Soviet monopoly [...]. The WFDY and the IUS were ... integral parts of the entire Communist system. Indeed, Alexander Sheljepin became head of the KGB while he was still a Vice-President of the IUS. [...] The USSR certainly spared no expense in capturing the spirit of young people, especially those of the Third World. Who else could have invited more than a million young people from all over the world to the Third World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow in 1959? (Kotek 1996:x) <sup>2</sup>

I was not a university student or graduate. I had not been appointed by a national student union, nor had I been an elected union officer at even the lowest possible level. I knew little more than that the IUS was one of a whole set of international Communist-led organisations<sup>3</sup> created as a result of the

wartime struggle against not only fascism but also imperialism; that it was for democracy, peace and student rights; that it continued, amongst students, the wartime alliance of Britain, the US, the Soviet Union and China. I had experienced the Cold War in the youth and student movements and was familiar with the consequent splitting of previously united organisations, followed by the creation of 'free world' internationals identified with liberalism, capitalism, imperialism and militarism. But I was quite ignorant both of the history of student internationals and internationalism in general and the foundation of the IUS in particular. This is how the organisation was seen by a founder many decades later:

Founded in 1946, in the years immediately following WWII, the IUS represented the hope for peaceful cooperation and the aspiration to a better life of a greater number of students worldwide than any organisation before or since. It was created in a time of liberation and in a world preparing to meet the challenges of reconstruction. Its evolution and activities reflect both influences. Its rapid growth was an expression of students' hunger for contact, for the undertaking of cooperative projects and for a specific student role in the public life of their countries and internationally. It gave expression to the nearly universal desire to rebuild and reshape a world which had permitted the emergence of fascism and world war. (Madden 2004:1)<sup>4</sup>

I was a professional rather than a political member of the IUS staff. Given, however, that English was the official language of the IUS, I found myself, aged 19, effectively the Chief Sub-Editor of WSN. It is a pity there was no such Capitalised Position. Indeed, there was no such position at all. I was simply the English Editor of *World Student News*. Since I happened to be the only member of staff with any journalistic training, my nine-month course nonetheless gave me, as youngest foreign staff member, something to lean on, draw from or build on. Furthermore, the IUS had carried over, from some pre-Stalinist movement tradition, the exotic notion that *all* non-clerical/administrative staff – at least if they came from abroad – should sit in on, and even contribute to, the meetings of the Secretariat. So I was now a Secretariat member of the oldest and most-international student organisation then existing. My transformation from a small fish within the British CP to a small fish at the IUS was a matter of both pride and apprehension.

Unfortunately, whilst I did have certain editing skills, I also discovered an emotional aversion to – possibly even a psychological incapacity for participation in – such committee meetings. Oscar Wilde identified the problem when he, himself a socialist, said socialism was impossible because there were not enough evenings in the week for all the meetings. Whilst in Prague I thought that my aversion was only to *international Communist* committee meetings (with the inevitable *longeurs* caused by diplomatic performance, language translation and cultural difference). Even our own General Secretary, Jiří Pelikán, who chaired these interminable events, seemed to have a problem with them. He had a nervous tic, which he later overcame, of trembling legs, with his hand in his crotch, as if he was doing something below the table that most Communist men did in bed or in the shower.

And my aversion extended to conferences, full of sound and fury signifying very little indeed. And then there was the Soviet-style clapping – with the speaker applauding the audience – or applauding them for applauding *him*! It seems that just as Communists were often more modernist than your common-or-garden modernist (Berman 1983), so did their meetings tend toward an archetype. The decision-making at the IUS, however, appeared to depend not on any explicit rule concerning voting, nor, indeed, on some implicit rule of consensus, but on the principle of 'last comrade standing'. This

honour was mostly shared between the Russians and the Czechs.<sup>5</sup> The Russians, of course, considered they were the privileged leaders and definers of the world revolution. But the Czechs were not only hosting the international student movement but possibly still considered themselves placed somehow between the Cold War powers and dogmas of Moscow and Washington. Moreover, Pelikán (1975:103) reminds me – or perhaps even lets me know for the first time – that the bill for the IUS was primarily met by the Soviet and Czech states! I should have had the nerve to cry off from such meetings, appealing to urgent business with WSN in the attic. No one but me would have noticed. But, granted the democratic right and honour of sitting in on and even contributing to these sleep-inducing events, I did not dare. Over time this pre-Stalinist participatory leftover was eroded, to my considerable relief.

Whilst I might have felt somewhat marginal to this international bureaucratic machine, as well as to that of national or international student politics, the IUS was itself marginalised. As a result, largely, of Communist instrumentalisation of the IUS, it had lost the non-Communist-led student unions in Western Europe and North America. They had gone off, at an early peak of the Cold War, to create the International Student Conference (aka COSEC or the Coordinating Secretariat). This later became a creature of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and a conduit for US state funding to student unions in what was not yet called the Third World (Agee Jr. 1991, Kotek 1996, 1998, Ramparts 1967). I did not then know about the CIA connection. But the ‘Student-as-Such’, Western, Free-World and Imperial orientation of the COSEC was enough to justify ourselves to ourselves, as revealed in my ‘What’s New?’ page in one issue of WSN (Waterman 1957):

The students-as-such concept was not included in the original constitution [of the NUS in the UK] in 1944. It came in at a later date when most of the students who had actually fought fascism had left the universities [...]. A-politicism ... was used by its supporters to try and isolate students in Communist-governed countries whose organisations were pointed out as *the* political ones in an a-political world. Even at that time ... this was not true. Even then students were fighting and dying in Asia, Africa and Latin America. But during the Cold War it served as one of the main arguments for breaking away from IUS which was trying (not always successfully) to give voice to the students not only of Western and Eastern Europe but also other parts of the world.

The IUS was gaining influence in student unions from the ‘colonial and semi-colonial’ countries, often starting with the organisations of such students in Western Europe. It had informal relations with certain West European unions, such as the French, and attempts to woo the West marked its policies. But in the case of the French such attempts were complicated by differences between French student unions as well as the hostility of the French toward the Algerian independence movement. Even the then liberal or social-democratic British National Union of Students (NUSEWNI) would turn up to observe IUS Congresses. But (my argument above notwithstanding) the IUS was fatally self-isolated from students in its own backyard. Most such were organised, by whips and carrots, in the official youth organisations, or in the student-front organisations of the party/state. The Romanian Union of Students, created whilst I was at the IUS, was one of the exceptions, but then only in name.

All of the IUS people from the Communist countries were, evidently, representatives of their party-states. They had left student life behind them. You had to be mature to represent immature students in the Communist world.<sup>6</sup> You had also to have demonstrated that your primary identification was with the Party rather than with the students – or anyone else. I recall the role played by the Hungarian representative, Janos Pataki, the most devious and unattractive individual I recall at the IUS. He had

been recalled to Hungary during the rising student unrest in Budapest and was therefore actually there during the Hungarian Uprising of October 1956. His party-state apologetic was published in WSN (Vol. 11, 1957, No. 1: 24-6).

Mostly in their mid-30s or even 40s, these men were apparently paid from or through their embassies, which also allocated them their apartments in Prague. This was not a matter discussed or discussable, far less one for which evidence was openly available. Kurt Vogel, representative of the German FDJ (Student Section?), a naïve but friendly soul, Head of the IUS Sports Department, was at least a partial exception, sharing pension accommodation with the rest of us. I once, quite madly, demonstrated my petty-bourgeois egalitarianism (i.e. proletarian egalitarianism) by proposing to the Secretariat that we institute an egalitarian wages policy, adjusted as necessary for married couples and for those with kids. Given that I was probably at the bottom of this scale, I had low self-interest as well as high revolutionary principle on my side. (I think my madness did not go so far as to address the Accommodation Question). My utopian proposal was opposed by Kurt, backed by the Chinese, who were able and willing to report their modest pay, whilst the other Secretariat members kept their better-paid mouths diplomatically shut.

The efforts of the IUS to take us on trips, or send us to speak to ČSM (Czechoslovak Youth Union) meetings in some depressing provincial town, were limited and formal. And the Czech staff at the IUS were, with exceptions, uninterested in socialising with us foreigners and were certainly not going to invite us to their homes. Denis Hill (1989:253) records a more dramatic experience, since he had a Czech woman penfriend, whom he tried to contact on arrival in Prague, and who wrote to excuse herself, because of the political situation, from continuing any relationship with him.

During two-and-a-half years I recall invitations to Czech homes only about three times. And one of these, I afterwards suspected, was to the home of someone from the state intelligence agency, the StB (he was Jewish, spoke English, was no student, but had accompanied us to and from a conference in Sofia). Another invitation was from Joy Moss-Kohoutova, an American Jewish Communist, who had studied Russian in Prague, married a Czech Communist, and spent the rest of a stressful life there. The accommodation of Joy and Jiří provided another explanation for the lack of invitations: it was one room, big enough for a double-bed and little else. But the general lack of hospitality, or of interest in fraternisation, had more to do with the show trials of the early 1950s, in which contact with even leftwing foreigners was – as revealed below in the case of Pelikán – a common accusation. Moreover, we foreigners from the West began to feel that we were being spied on within the IUS itself. This idea first arose during an IUS Congress in Prague, when an unusually made-up and heavily-perfumed Czech girl, whose medical student credentials could not be confirmed by us, was clearly seeking contact with both the foreign delegates and us Western IUS staff. On another occasion, at a social evening which involved all staff, we presented a greetings card to a man with equally dubious credentials, making fun of his transparent efforts to spy on us. He did not react, and there were no repercussions.

I myself had several personal brushes with Czechoslovak security. The first was only a week or two after my arrival, when I went to register myself with the British Embassy, in Malá Strana, a little up the hill towards the castle. I was the first British Communist to do this, at least at the IUS. Eventually I paid the price, since I went to celebrate the Queen's Birthday there and was confronted with one working-class Englishwoman whose miserable life as the wife of a Czech in Olomouc had just been complemented by having to stand in the train from there to Prague. And then by the English Editor of the propaganda magazine *Czechoslovak Life*, a former *Daily Worker* staffer, who didn't let either of

these prevent him from keeping up a stream of drunken cynicism (he later ‘toldall’ in a British Sunday paper). One or two years later, Denis Hill recalls, the other comrades also registered at the embassy – though with no apparent recognition for my pioneering effort. There existed amongst the foreign Communists some unarticulated belief that we were not so much citizens of the UK as soldiers in the army of international socialist revolution. Whilst I myself had no feeling of attachment to the British state, and reacted with alarm to the embassy’s offer to help me with accommodation, I evidently thought that registration was some kind of right I had as a British citizen. I took the wrong tram home and got off – appropriately as it turned out – on Stalinova (later, again Vinohradská). Whilst consulting my street map I was challenged in Czech by what was evidently a plain-clothes officer. My reaction was a British YCL knee-jerk. I refused to give him any information until he had legitimised himself, which he did ... whilst holding his thumb over his own name on what appeared to be some kind of identity card. Somehow, and despite mutual incomprehension and cultural difference, I managed to persuade him that I was not, as he had assumed, a suicidal Czech hobnobbing in broad daylight with British imperialism. On return to the IUS, of course, I reported the misunderstanding to Pelikán.

Another brush with what I and my Slovak companion began to call, in German, the *polizei*, was possibly the most telling. Ivan was an old pen-pal of my girlfriend, Zuzana (for whom see below), his surname being the Slovak equivalent of her maiden name. Ivan was a student of folk music in Bratislava. When I went there to make some ritual IUS speech, November 1956, I arranged to meet him. After the ceremony we went off for a day to Ivan’s home village, in the Danubian plains. Admittedly this was only 25km or so from the Hungarian border. But was imperialism threatening socialist Hungary across this frontier? Ivan had cleared this trip with the ČSM, the official youth organisation. Now, if ‘Gbelce’ suggests the sound of a rubber boot being pulled out of deep wet mud, this evokes this dreary village, over which grey clouds promised an eternal deluge (God’s punishment for Czechoslovak complicity with Soviet repression in Hungary). Ivan had been giving me a conventional tour of state farms and medical centres, enlivened by an irreverent commentary, when we were stopped by a Party official who was also some kind of village mayor. We were obliged to end our visit forthwith. Ivan was summoned to visit the ‘competent authorities’ when he got back to Bratislava. Eventually, however, and after lengthy efforts on Ivan’s part, the man was sacked. When I told this story to my by-now ex-CP mother, as an example of a democratic victory against Stalinist bureaucracy, she was unimpressed. She could not see how an administrative act by some state authority suggested any particular democratic achievement.

None of my various arrests was due to critical or provocative action on my part. Any such behaviour was reserved for the grossest Communist authoritarianism, dogmatism or apologetics. After Gbelce, indeed, I *celebrated* in a letter home the village’s achievements under socialism. But I did repeatedly complain to Czech magazines that edited or distorted my occasional photographic or written contributions. On one occasion I refused payment, suggesting that this be paid to the person who had been responsible for the article published under my name. Any complaint would be met with avoidance strategies, by no doubt bemused journalists, and never had any positive outcome. Something similar was unfortunately true of the letters I occasionally sent to the CP publications at home. During the tumultuous events in Eastern Europe, 1956, Alan Brown, former English editor of WSN, possibly now employed by the World Federation of Trade Unions, published a grossly propagandistic account of what was happening in Prague in the *Daily Worker*.<sup>7</sup> In a letter of November 24, 1956, and unpublished, I replied in part as follows:

The public and official reactions to the Hungarian events in this country were rather different to the private and unofficial ones. Nobody here would have dared to vote against a resolution supporting the ... Party line on Hungary even on the basis that they ... would like more information. I think that the majority here did support the line but there is a very large minority, by no means fascist or reactionary, which disagrees with it. This minority (which in Poland has become a majority) can be found at all levels in the Communist Party, the Union of Youth and amongst sections of the population with the most diverse political outlooks [...]. The unity here was not only one of a natural reaction to violence and bloodshed but also to incomplete information in the press, panic and coercion. I know definitely of one meeting where ... the resolution was passed when only one person had put his hand up and no discussion had taken place (of course, if the others had had the chance *all* would have voted for the resolution, being afraid not to).

If this sounds rather independent from the Party line anywhere, I also held to a belief in the final, if slow, triumph of democratic Communism. I would switch between criticism and endorsement of Communism, even in its sad Czech emanation. In the middle of the Hungarian Crisis in Czechoslovakia and the UK, I received from my parents a letter distinguishing some socialist baby from the Stalinist bathwater. I replied to the effect that the baby was fine and that they should stay in the Party to prevent the baby from drowning.<sup>8</sup>

## **World Student News: A Hopeless Proposition?**

*The editors [of World Student News], and IUS personnel in general, were strangely indifferent to whether anyone actually read the material pouring out of Vocolova [IUS headquarters]. This is a not uncommon failing among ideologues [...]. A truly international magazine is a hopeless proposition ... if it attempts to straddle all continents ... and serve both capitalist and socialist economic systems! [...] The best you can hope for is a bland compromise. (Hill 1989:270)*

Up in the attic we had our own little world in WSN. There were five or ten of us involved, mostly fulltime. Apart from the Spanish, French, Italian, Arabic, Russian and Scandinavian editors, we had a Czech production manager, an artist/designer, an accountant, a secretary and, when Denis turned up, a distribution manager. The German edition was published in Berlin, the Russian in Moscow. Moreover, we had something to produce monthly, which was certainly more tangible than a conference ending with a decision to hold another conference.

Denis was both right and wrong. He was right that the IUS, in churning out publications, was involved in a ritual that had more to do with bloc politics, Communist ideology and institutional self-affirmation than anything out there in the really existing world of students. He is wrong in his belief that an international publication has to be some kind of compromise between the needs of different world areas. After all, such a publication *could* have been a means of creating a common culture between such. This, in any case, was what most of us were hoping for. When I arrived, however, the magazine was something of a dead parrot<sup>9</sup> produced by unimaginative bureaucrats, based in Eastern Europe, and with little possible appeal to flesh-and-blood students in the world outside. Bundles were posted off to an address list that had accumulated since 1946. Articles told about the happy life of students in the People's Democracies, the hardships of those in the Capitalist world, and the hell of

those in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies. Successive headlines in one issues of WSN (No. 7, Vol. 11, 1957) illustrate these three orientations:

**In Czechoslovakia there is  
AN OPEN ROAD TO EDUCATION**  
by Jan Hajný  
an editor of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth daily,  
*Mladá Fronta*

**LOANS WILL NOT HELP STUDENTS**  
says *Heinrich Wittneben, Chairman of the Union of German Students (VDS)*

**IN IRAQ POLICE AND DISEASE ARE THE STUDENTS' ENEMIES**  
by *Ali Hussain of General Union of Iraqi Students*

The Chief Editor of WSN was a Secretariat appointee and didn't have any necessary journalistic qualifications, capacities or even interests. When I arrived it was the impressively supercilious and superficial Cuban, Lionel Soto.<sup>10</sup> By the time I left it was the humourless Indian bureaucrat, Sudhansu Chaudhuri. But, whoever was Chief Editor – and he might be off on other duties for months at a time – the real editor, as far as I was concerned, was the Russian one, Igor Biriukov. Up in WSN, the last comrade standing between the English Editor and the printer was Igor.

There was a story, passed to me by our production manager, Hana, that Igor and Alan Brown, the retiring English Editor, used to chase after each other to the printers to get last things past each other. What they might have been disagreeing about was a mystery to me since Alan, who had previously worked in some capacity at the *Daily Worker*, seemed to me fully adjusted to the Stalin School of Falsification. This I discovered with my first assignment, which was to do the report on the World Youth Festival in Warsaw, a month or so after my arrival. I had decided to hang the story on three or four festival participants from different continents. I also had WSN's massive single-lens reflex Praktika camera to photograph them with. My story went in part:

Who are you, black girl with the bright eyes, and you, boy from Asia with the thatch of straight black hair, and this lass with the shy smile, and the young man with a moustache, and this girl who speaks only Polish. Where do you come from? What do you do in life? What brought you to Warsaw? What are you going to do here?

On return to Prague I discovered that Alan had thrown out my photos, replaced them with agency ones, and had others of mine reworked as (very nice) drawings by our artist, Miloš. My name had, for better or worse, been removed from the report, which had been edited, consistent with Alan's introductory paragraph, reading in part:

Many times during the Festival a very simple phrase was heard, epitomising what the young people, coming together over mountains and oceans, and from all five continents, felt: **'Let there be peaceful skies over all lands'**.

I was incandescent: 60 percent of the published text was by Alan, who had not been there.

It was a relentless struggle trying to improve the look, structure and content of WSN. I like to think

that I made significant improvements in the layout – often against the resistance of Miloš, who would express this in a tone of dismissive contempt in German, his one foreign language. Miloš once sent our Czech staff into waves of hysterical laughter by leaving on his drawing board a sheet of paper bearing the single capitalised word ‘HOVNO’. This meant to me nothing more scatological than ‘shit’. However, it apparently could also mean ‘fuck’, and that was clearly beyond the pale amongst educated Czechs. Today on Google, the word has 10 pages or more of Czech references, of which one is to ‘hovno.net’.<sup>11</sup>

Let us move on from *hovno* in particular to the structure and contents of WSN more generally. We developed a page for readers’ letters and one for editors, written by each of us in turn. I also established a section of short news items, each headed by the name of the country and the subject. We tried to obtain paid advertisements, to organise sales competitions, to establish student correspondents with WSN press cards. We ran competitions for literature, art, photography and journalism. All these attempts were severely limited by our physical, political and – I guess – cultural distance from students in the West and South – those whom the IUS most wanted to reach. The physical distance was created by the Cold War and the infamous Iron Curtain. This meant that even though Prague is further to the West than Vienna, it might have just as well been in Bulgaria or Russia, since mail was slow (being checked by one or both sides), and all travel, even within the Communist bloc and for its citizens, required exit and entry visas.

A document we submitted to the IUS Secretariat dealt quite forcefully with the disinterest of the organisation in the publication. Although this must have been approved by the editors as a group, I recognise my own direct mode of expression. Whilst appropriately self-critical (I mean of WSN, not of *myself*), the document made numerous criticisms of the Secretariat. These concerned its general disinterest in either content or distribution, the cavalier attitude toward appointment of a working Chief Editor, the lack of anything other than propaganda materials from the East European countries, the avoidance of controversy, the treatment of ‘Middle Eastern and colonial countries’ in terms only of demonstrations, protests and ‘bad things imposed’ upon them, the ‘unimaginative and propagandist’ nature of coverage of the IUS itself within WSN. There were several paragraphs on controversy. It identified two types of such submitted material:

- The [contribution that] sincerely wants co-operation but thinks that IUS is wrong and has several criticisms.
- The type represented by the letter *from Dutch Social Democrats* – disagrees violently with IUS policy, tried to create trouble *but* represents a large body of student opinion. [...]
- Maybe instead of pretending to be ‘broad’ by carrying articles by communists and left-wingers who do not call themselves so, we should consider having articles by Communists, Catholics, Social Democrats and Liberals, all calling themselves by their own names [...].
- There is too little real controversy in WSN .... Our ‘Art Symposium’ failed through lack of controversy between abstract art and realistic art and even between realist artists. We would like to put the question: would it be good to have articles attacking realism? (IUS Secretariat 1956)

Whatever decisions the Secretariat might have taken as a result of the discussion clearly did not

transform the magazine. WSN continued to occupy its largely ritual role. Far from recognising that the medium was itself part of the message (an idea developed only a couple of decades later), the organisation was not able to seriously consider communication even as an effective tool.

The isolation of the IUS from student life and discontent within the Communist world was shown by a national wave of student protest, from Bratislava to Prague, involving demonstrations and mass meetings, the latter sometimes coordinated by (or through) the faculty-level ČSM organisations! One of these took place on April 27, 1956, in the presence of Pelikán himself – and in his capacity as leader of the IUS. Within the IUS we were hearing faint echoes of student discontent through cautiously-worded reports in the state-controlled press. Or from faint copies of student resolutions. These were translated for us interested foreigners by Joy Kohoutova and others. Some were apparently typed out in English by my good self. There was certainly no report on such to the IUS either by our Czech member organisation, the ČSM, or by Pelikán. There then followed the first student street protest in Prague since the Communist takeover in 1948. This took place May 20, 1956. What had happened was that the ČSM, or Party, had been emboldened by the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU, in February 1956, to give way to student pressure for the restoration of the traditional student carnival, the Majáles. Or perhaps the appropriate word here would be not so much ‘emboldened’ as ‘disoriented’. In any case, I went along, with a Czech friend, as interpreter, to report and photograph the event. The official concession went dramatically wrong as the students used the carnival to express more discontent than they had previously dared. And this in front of laughing and cheering crowds of bystanders. Two days later *Mladá Fronta*, the ČSM daily, ‘reported’ it under the innocuous title, ‘Fun as well as Bread is Necessary for the Life of Man’. What the paper was trying to do was to reduce the demonstration to the kind of student-as-such politics that the IUS condemned.

With either the explicit or implicit approval of Pelikán, I did a report on the Majáles for WSN, leading to the most prolonged and bitter dispute in my time there.<sup>12</sup> Igor was resistant to any suggestion that this was a protest against the regime rather than a light-hearted complaint about student conditions. My draft went through two or three revisions as I threw words overboard in the hope of saving the ship. Hana, our Czech technical editor, and certainly no Communist, afterwards said to me that she thought it should never have been published. She must have felt that it was inappropriate or dangerous for the IUS, WSN or even her, to be rocking the boat of established power. I went off on holiday to the UK as WSN was being put to bed (for the customary sleep at the printers) with the conviction that even what had survived the censorship would have been further adjusted, or excluded from the (East) German and Soviet editions. I failed to establish that this was the case and was afraid to hunt too hard. My report might have been the most revealing published anywhere by the Communist press at that time. But if this was a victory, it was only one and it was obviously compromised by its confinement to a publication and organisation that were otherwise unchanged.

The most striking images of what actually happened, I think, were two of the photos I made, one of academic freedom in chains, the other of *Libri Prohibiti* (Latin: banned books).<sup>13</sup> The procession started in Vinohrady, or maybe just off the top of Václavské Náměstí (Wenceslas Square), both within walking distance of the IUS office. But it clearly never occurred to the students to appeal, either before or after the event, for the support of the IUS. Indeed, it seems to have not even occurred to *me* that the students might have done this! Had they done so, either before or after the consequent repression, it would have been a considerable embarrassment to the IUS. But the fact is that neither Jifí Pelikán (1975) nor Denis Hill (1989), both of whom write critically about this period, even mentions the Majáles. In participating in or simply observing the event, I had gone more native than

Denis recalls.<sup>14</sup> But the students of Slovakia and the Czech lands had demonstrated that the natives were restive. In a wide-ranging and radically-democratic document that foreshadowed the Prague Spring of 1968, the ČSM organisation at the Faculty of Maths and Physics at Charles University addressed itself directly to the matter of international student relations:

We ask that appropriate central organs support an effort to intensify international student contacts - the exchange of publications and reciprocal visits of our students and Western students. We consider it necessary to put an end to the notion and the practice that international contacts are conducted only by officials from the regional level and higher. We ask that the number of student exchanges with the USSR be increased and that study in Western countries be made possible.... (Mathews 2003:273-9)

There were, in a May 28 meeting at FAMU which I attended, other issues raised which had directly to do with international student exchanges – if only with Communist Poland. Here the existence of the IUS was ignored except insofar as access to its international student card might be used in reducing travel costs. The FAMU meeting revealed many of the tensions of student and academic life in Czechoslovakia at that time. But, curiously, the main sources of student protest in Prague appeared to have been the faculties of science and technology rather than the social sciences and arts. I can only speculate that the former were less politically controlled than the latter.

Whilst the peak of the early Cold War had passed, and WSN made considerable efforts to publish material on and from the West, we were confronted either by hostility to Communism, or by the apoliticism espoused by many Western student unions, or by general student integration into liberal-democratic polities and a burgeoning consumer capitalism. And, then, any rapprochement between West and East, between Communist student organisations and social-democratic or liberal ones, was shattered by the Hungarian Uprising (October-November 1956). This overlapped with the Suez War (November 1956) in which the British, French and Israelis attempted to reverse the Egyptian nationalisation of the Suez Canal, and to destroy the radical-nationalist militarist regime of Abdel Gamal Nasser. This late, if not last, British attempt to exercise its old imperial power provoked dramatic protests in the UK, not least from students. But this was also the case for the more-successful Soviet attempt to hold on to its newer empire in Hungary. The IUS wanted to publish the anti-imperialist protest in the UK but not the anti-Soviet one. My feeling was that we could not publicise the first without the second. The British group at the IUS agreed, and our decision was later approved by King Street (The CPGB's head office) The result was that WSN had *no* report of any British student protest at this time! I had not foreseen this possible and, indeed, predictable outcome. For me it was a victory rather more Pyrrhic than the one of Greek mythology.

Such political differences and distances did not necessarily apply to the Third World (still the 'colonial and ex-colonial world'). We provided extensive coverage of Africa, Asia and Latin America, and out of the twenty or so copies of WSN for which I was co-responsible, I note nine or ten Third World covers, three specifically African. Coverage of this whole world area and its struggles was clearly something I felt completely at home with. But, given the repressive colonial or post-colonial regimes, the delays of surface mail, and the penury of students and their organisations there, our reach was inevitably limited. When I arrived in Prague there was a representative there of the UK-based and radically-nationalist West African Students Union, Ademola Thomas. He was once highly pissed off with me for publishing in WSN a photo of him with his shoes off, at an anti-colonial seminar in Prague. I had thought it rather disarming. I had known Ade, a Nigerian student of architecture, from

student Communism in London. He was a charming guy but not interested in personal friendship and, in any case, he departed after a year or so for Nigeria.

Perhaps the best and longest homage of WSN to the Third World was Carlo Meana's three-part report, beginning with 'Buongiorno Vietnam' (Vol. 10, No. 5-8, 1956). Carlo had been part of an international student delegation to Vietnam in the pause between the defeat of the French and the war with the US. We were all obviously identified with the Vietnamese struggle and Carlo's account combined his observations with a personal style and a delightful presentation of Ho Chi Minh, as 'Old Rice Beard'.

I guess that in talking of political differences and distances I have already covered cultural ones. However, WSN had always had considerable cultural coverage – in the sense of historical and contemporary arts and artefacts and contemporary radical cinema. Carlo (Meana 2000:60-61) and Igor were enthusiasts for such material. Most of it was either Western or Southern, with the archaeological coverage being as much of Asia and Latin America as anything either from the West or the East. Given the powerful and radical graphic arts of Latin America, we were able to reproduce prints and posters from that region. And we achieved something of a coup when we got permission from Diego Rivera to publish some of his decorative pieces just a few years before his death. These were – after endless delays at the East German printer – eventually printed and packaged as a collection and offered to our readers as prizes. I accompanied Ricardo Ramirez (1929-98), our Spanish Editor from Guatemala, to interview Rivera, and got his signature on a reproduction of his famous Guatemala mural that I had earlier extracted from a Bulgarian magazine.

One issue alone of WSN (Vol. 10, No. 6-7, 1956) carried 'The Painting of Ancient Japan', a short story from a Canadian student magazine, a piece on British student theatre, a note on a West German film, three woodcuts from Mexico and Brazil, and an instalment in 'The Story of a Walking Exhibition', contributed by the three charming Chileans who had brought it to Eastern Europe and took it through to China. We also did a nice two-page spread on the 'sculpture painting' of David Siqueiros, his amazing bas-relief covering a central building of UNAM, the University of Mexico (Vol. 10, No. 8, 1956:14-15). There was amongst us the knowledge that Rivera had been a Trotskyist and that Siqueiros had made an attempt on the life of Trotsky, but by the 1950s Rivera appeared reconciled to Communism. So this rather important piece of international Communist history was treated by us as an amusing if puzzling bit of Mexican folklore.

## **Primitive Socialism Their Example**

- **Sad Country**<sup>15</sup>

It was actually on my second stay in Czechoslovakia that I first heard the question 'Why did you come to this sad country?'. Maybe, in the mid-1950s, this was not the kind of question you asked a foreign Communist. I found it an unanswerable question and a devastating condemnation, even if it lacked the grace and cutting edge of the humour to be found in the bottomless well of anti-Communist jokes (Waterman 1991). Czechoslovakia, in the mid-1950s *was* a sad country. This was early intimated to me when the train that brought me to Prague had stopped in Plzeri. If a country could be considered to be suffering from depression (as distinguished from *a* depression), this was Czechoslovakia at that time. Indeed, this turned out to be so for the next 30 years, with the brief exception of the Prague

Spring of 1968.

People were almost universally dressed in green Loden coats or grey raincoats, the men in grey suits, the women in the shiny and blowsy European fashions of ten years earlier. Even freshly-painted buildings, new clothes, hoardings and toys were in dull colours that looked as if they had been checked by a censor, with a pot of a colour called dull, to avoid over-stimulating the citizenry. Dressed down for home and weekends, they wore dull blue *tepláky* (tracksuits) and *kecki* (as in Keds basketball boots). Even the Czechs found these supremely unattractive. I discovered this when I said, in mixed company, that I found them sexy (because of what they obviously hid and because they came off so quickly). In the trams people did not chat with each other and many stank of sweat. The overwhelming impression was of a people surviving rather than living. They looked as if they had all quit work after writing *HOVNO* on it. The children were shepherded and lacking in spontaneity. In the restaurants and nightclubs, the waiters wore grey or black, and the musicians played 10-year-old or even pre-war dance music. If I had then wanted to read Kafka (who I had been told was a decadent bourgeois individualist), or had had access to him in English, which I didn't, I might have recognised his claustrophobic Prague. This suggests that it was not Communism alone that determined the pessimistic atmosphere and resigned attitudes. But Communism had clearly done nothing to transform this.

Above the roofs of the buildings in what is the most dramatic, if not also the most beautiful, main square in Europe, Václavské náměstí (Wenceslas Square) there stood the illuminated slogan,

### **SOVĚTSKÝ SVAZ, NÁŠ VZOR (Soviet Union Our Example)**

On Letná, the parade ground and park on the other side of the Vltava, overlooking Staré Město (Old Town), was the world's biggest statue of Stalin. It was as if, in coming to power in the most economically and socially-advanced country of the bloc, the local Communists had felt they had to demonstrate most slavishly their obeisance to their gigantic but primitive master. Either because of or despite our being West European Communists, we felt the humiliation of these symbols.

The regime took more enthusiastically to Hašek and his *Good Soldier Švejk* (Schweik). This was, no doubt, because they were attached to him, and could treat him as harmless folklore, as portrayed in Trnka's brilliant puppet films. Here Švejk was joined by both rural folk music and factory brass bands, each encouraged by the state. It was therefore the beauty of Golden Prague, the traditional folklore and the subversive obeisance of the irrepressible Švejk that compensated for the almost universal greyness. Mind you, I had ambiguous feelings about the slippery Švejk, still preferring the heroics of Communist martyr, Julius Fucík and his *Notes from the Gallows*<sup>16</sup> Another saving grace was the infinite supply of anti-Communist, or anti-Communist-regime, jokes. It was my feeling that these told us more about the nature of Czechoslovakia than any kind of analysis, any kind of ideology, any kind of theory. There was the licensed humour of jolly Jan Werich (whose pre-war partner, Jifí Voskovec had wisely stayed in the US after the Second World War):

An impressionist paints what he sees, an expressionist what he feels, and a socialist realist what he hears.<sup>17</sup>

The unlicensed ones had more bite:

In Czechoslovakia we still have the cult of the individual [condemned at the Twentieth

Congress of the CPSU] but without the individual.

A Soviet trade delegation visits one of the People's Democracies. After a lengthy discussion of relative needs and production possibilities, one member of the host delegation says, 'On what exact basis are you proposing we exchange our products? Are we talking world market prices?' The Soviet respond was 'Capitalist Prices!? Of course not! We trade on the basis of the principles of proletarian internationalism!'. 'What other basis could there possibly be?' 'Well,' says one of the hosts, 'we *were* thinking about ...umm...fifty-fifty?'

Novotný, boss of both the Czechoslovak State and the Communist Party, wants to know what the people really think about him. He knows his advisors won't tell him. So he puts on a false moustache, an old green loden coat and a blue beret. Then he goes off to U Fleků, best-known Prague beerhouse, deep in the maze of streets beneath Prague Castle. Here he joins in the drinking, card-playing and singing, buying his own share of rounds. Whilst the others continue singing, Novotný turns to his neighbour and asks, *soto voce*, 'Hey, what do you think of Novotny?' The young man responds with shock and fear, glancing around the table to see if anyone else has heard the question: 'Not here! Not here!' he whispers. Novotný invites him outside to the street, which is deserted. He asks him again. 'Not here! Not here! Not under the lamp,' the man responds, pointing up at the dim light above. 'Round the corner, then', says Novotny, now somewhat apprehensively. In the dark alley Novotný repeats his question: 'Come on, now, there's nobody here. What do you *really* think of Novotny?' The man shoots nervous glances in both directions: 'Promise you won't tell anybody?' Novotný reassures him. The man takes a long careful look in both directions, a deep breath, and beckons Novotný closer so that he can whisper, 'Well, then! For your ears only: I think Novotny's a really good guy'.

A staff member of the US embassy is trying to drive up Nerudova, the steep, narrow street leading from Malá Strana to the Hradčany (the Castle). He is obstructed by a horse-drawn beer cart, which the driver is keeping in the middle of the road. Finally, as they reach the final corner, the man hoots one more time, overtakes and shouts out, in perfect Czech, 'You'll never build socialism in that way, my friend!'. The old guy turns round, spits out a stream of tobacco juice and says, 'Fuck off, Communist!'

An American, Russian and Czech tourist are looking at the most dramatic set of waterfalls in the world, at Iguazu on the border of Brazil and Argentina. The American says, 'If we ran this we would commercialise it, build an international airport, charge entry fees, have rides over the falls, a Disneyland, Hilton Hotels, and a Democracy Theme Park'. The Russian says, 'As the Great Lenin once said, "Communism Equals Soviet Power Plus the Electrification of the Whole Country". If we ran this we would build the world's greatest dam, supply power to the industry of both countries and thus create a South American economy independent of imperialism. The Czech says, 'Who gives a shit?'

Socialism might be OK but shouldn't they have tried it out on animals first?

Is it possible to build socialism in one country? Yes, but it's better to live in another.

Is it possible to build socialism in Switzerland? Yes. But why?

Is it possible to build socialism in Canada? Yes, but where would we get our wheat from?

Under capitalism you have the exploitation of man by man. Under socialism it's the other way round.

Socialism is the stage of development between capitalism and ... capitalism.

This last is possibly the cruellest of all because of the way it was transformed from a joke into a reality. It was based on the Marxist-Leninist notion of socialism as the stage of development between capitalism and communism. But it was also, no doubt, inspired by state attempts – feeble as they were – to make the regime acceptable by providing the population with consumer goods. Later on this came to be called 'Goulash Communism'.

## • **The (Counter?) Revolution**

Gottwald [Communist leader during the trials] and other leaders had mobilised the population: 'These people are sabotaging our economy ... and if we have not advanced as rapidly as we had promised you in 1948, it is their fault. These individuals are foreign elements (by implication Jews) who understand nothing of the mentality of the Czech people. Their country is not Czechoslovakia because the country, for these cosmopolitans, is the whole world'. (Pelikán 1975:92)

Some Czech experiences were difficult to laugh away, particularly the Communist takeover of 1948 and the purges and show-trials that shortly followed. The latter had finished only one year before I arrived (Pelikán 1971). February 1948 was represented by the regime as a revolution and by the opposition as a coup. It was neither the one nor (precisely) the other. In many ways it was a counter-revolution, in the sense of replacing the liberal-democratic state and social-democratic coalition of 1945-48 with the standard Stalinist model (which the Soviet liberation/occupation/domination had already imposed on the rest of East and Central Europe). Just as Lenin had abolished the Constituent Assembly after the Revolution when Bolshevik popularity was waning, so did the Czechoslovak CP do away with liberal democracy when its vote was falling. Why this was not a traditional coup or putsch was because the takeover was widely supported by the working class in what was the most urban and industrialised country of the Soviet Bloc (Rupnik 1982). This was, in some ways, a dictatorship of the proletariat, though without the democratic implications or aspirations of Marx's original formulation.

The arrests and purges that followed February 1948 gradually extended themselves from the bourgeoisie and middle-classes to the CP and its front organisations themselves. The show-trials followed, under Soviet supervision, and with the now-obligatory anti-semitism (Kavan 1988, London 1970, Margolius Kovaly 1998, Šlingova 1968).<sup>18</sup> Whilst the latter hardly drew on any history of mass popular hostility to Jews in Czechoslovakia, it certainly fed such. And insofar as the purges and trials of the middle-class and Jews (and especially Bourgeois Cosmopolitan Jews) provided both chauvinist self-justification and office and political employment, allowing for the rapid promotion of workers into positions thus vacated, it led to no public protest.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, and insofar as this implied loyal rather than qualified managers and administrators, it also led to the quasi-universal complaint, 'I know more than my boss'. In 1953 the police and army had been called in to repress an uprising in

Plzeň. By the time I arrived the regime had established itself as a dictatorship over the proletariat. The attitude of the proletariat, as throughout the Communist world, was: 'They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work'.

Whilst by 1955, when I arrived, there had been a certain relaxation of the repression, this returned, particularly with the uprising in Hungary, late-1956. Wednesday, November 7, was the annual holiday and demonstration commemorating the Russian Revolution. I went along with my camera. And I made notes for an unpublished and immediately discontinued diary:

What a bitter day it is this year. How can one rejoice freely in the knowledge that this is the anniversary of an uprising that started a new era in world history .... At lunchtime I went down to Václavské with Tore-Jarl to photograph the demo .... No disciplined masses, no riotous gaiety .... We went to our special positions in the Old Town Square ... we had to push through the crowds of people, many People's Policemen (the factory guards) in their black raincoats and berets .... The crowd chanted many things .... The most interesting and clearly the most spontaneous was [with reference to the Hungarian Uprising]; 'If they try it here we'll cut them into three pieces'. Not a good day on which to be a reactionary in Czechoslovakia! .... At the end of the meeting we sang the 'Internationale' but I don't think I ever sang it with less thought and enthusiasm.

## **Living Under Socialism (*Národní Podnik*)**

The extent of nationalisation in Czecho was more or less total. Even the newspaper stalls belonged to some *Ndrodní Podnik* (National Enterprise). With exceptions, most of us foreign IUS staff, from the West and the South, had pension accommodation, mostly in the rundown Pension Skfivan (Skylark), in Londýnská (London) street, a five-minute walk from the IUS building, in Vocelova, itself not more than ten minutes uphill from Wenceslas Square.

For my first few weeks I had the room of Alan Brown, the guy I was taking over from, since he was away in the UK, eventually negotiating his return to Prague. This was a Room Without a View, since it backed onto the courtyard of the block, where the plastering had clearly not been renewed since 1938. It had a washbasin, a table and chair, an easy chair with a coffee table, a bed, but also a deep if narrow alcove I was later to use as my photo laboratory. Altogether it was not bad. Alan, however, returned for two or three months and I had to shift back into the over-heated, dank Hotel Graf/Kriván, with its permanent smell of boiled cabbage and dank carpets (or was that boiled carpets and dank cabbage?). I then moved to the more distant Pension Ametyst, where I would have felt isolated even if anyone there had spoken English. Here, when the lighting failed, I could practice my new touch-typing, with the added challenge that the German keyboard of the portable typewriters of WSN switched the X and the Y.

The Skfivan was a relief since here at least we could borrow candles and commiserate with each other. We needed to since the winter of 1955-56 was so severe that I even myself eventually bought the ubiquitous longjohns, offered in two colours, off-white and off-grey. I had been frozen into these by even the five-minute walk to the office. But there was no way I could comfortably fit these humiliating things around my relatively slim body. In the space between the double windows, used by Czechs as a winter refrigerator, bottles of milk grew extended necks with silver tops, and tomatoes

turned into billiard balls. On more normal mornings I would go round the corner to the dairy (*Mlékarna: Národní Podnik*), where I would have cocoa, salty rolls with butter, a fruit yoghurt, then pass the busy crossing of two tram routes, and round one more corner to Vöcelova 3. On the way I might pop into the grocer or greengrocer (*národní podnik*). ‘Popping’ may not be the right word for shopping in Prague, since the system required first purchasing a ticket, then queueing for the required item, and then often queueing again for it to be packaged. The blue-coated policemen at the corner were nonetheless comforting, despite their side arms, because they came in all sizes, had flat caps and seemed friendly.

In the Skfivan we had a common kitchen, which was our only communal space. We had to take turns at the one cooker. Here we could also learn recipes from and share food with each other. This was a life-saver, since the food at the IUS canteen in the Hotel Graf/Kriván (not to be confused with the Pension Skfivan) was totally Middle-European, bland, greasy, carbohydrate-heavy and monotonous. The star of most dishes was the cartwheel-sized *knedlík*, something like English suet, of which several would be lined up proudly on one edge. Food was served by Dana, young, permed, slow, rushed and overweight, who, like all restaurant staff in Prague, was dressed in some kind of Central European uniform from the 1930s, in which the major colour notes were grey and black. In the Skfivan, away from work, fortunately, some of my colleagues wore national costume in free styles and colours.

## The Freedom of the Mountains

The first time I went skiing in my life was on a Christmas trip organised by the IUS. I had to borrow boots and trousers. Until the last twenty minutes in the bus there was no snow to be seen and I was in a condition of high anxiety, fearing that my dream of a white Christmas would turn out to be a dank one. Downhill skiing, even in the absence of any ski-lifts, was like being in a totally different element, fulfilling my childhood dreams of turning somersaults in the air. As in other holiday situations, skiing was one of those situations in which the Czechs came alive. New Year’s Eve there was a special menu, ending with a dessert that we call in English, or American, Baked Alaska - icecream covered with baked meringue. We waited an hour and a half for the main dish of chicken. And then the waiter finally turned up with my first dish ... Baked Alaska (‘Soviet Union Our Example?’). If this was intended to remind us that we were still in Czecho, the twenty minute downhill run to the bus was repeated in my dreams for weeks. When I told Igor, who had previously only done *langlauf* (cross-country) skiing, he told me he had had the same experience.

The second time I went to the mountains was with the WSN photographer, his wife and a group of their student friends. This was, thus, quite independent of the IUS, the Čedok travel agency (*Národní Podnik*), and was housed in a wooden *chata* (cottage), with primitive water supply, heating and lighting. We had to take a ski-lift and then ski to the cottage in the dark. One of our party brought with him some laboratory-made alcohol. Surrounded by Czechs I used the week to improve *my* Czech. Every day when we were not entirely surrounded by mist we would ski down the slope and then make our way painfully back up. Later on, my Communist skiing experience would get me into the corps skiing team in the British Army.

Now and again I would try to get out of, or on top of, my daily experiences in Prague by toying with ideas of becoming a writer or a film director. The latter ambition was stimulated by my contacts with

the film schools and students in Prague and Moscow. I would like to think that the idea I sent to my new Soviet friend, Renita, reveals my struggle, late 1957, to surpass a naïve optimism, though I fear that what comes over is a naïve pessimism, some notion that I – or we, or the Czechs – were *condemned* to Communism. Still, it reveals how I, now some kind of adult, was living my ambiguities:

The action takes place in present-day Czechoslovakia. The chief character is a girl student of journalism at Charles University in Prague. She has a middle-class background and while her outlook on life and personal relationships and habits are typical of her class, she is also a candidate for Party membership. This is because of a rather vague feeling that the party is interested in the welfare of people and not through belief in or understanding of Marxism .... One day she is invited to join the Party and given a week to think it over. During that week she talks with a number of people and thinks over her past life. Some things pull her one way and some things another. There is the character of the Party Committee. On it there is the Rector (who is only a member because he thinks it wise), an ex-factory worker (who follows the official line), a journalist who has been in the Party for a long time but got into trouble during the 1948-52 period (he has given up fighting for his opinions) and others.

Amongst the students there [is] a complete reactionary, various ones who are trying to understand or do something and the majority who are only interested in studying, getting a comfortable job afterwards, sleeping with each other and going to concerts.

In the girl's past life there is her family, an affair with a foreign Communist journalist (!) and an incident with the police. She thinks over all the arguments, discusses with her friends and decides she will join in spite of many misgivings. But at the meeting she becomes so disgusted with the behaviour of the Rector and - knowing that she is making a fatal decision – she denounces him. The same evening she kills herself.

The last part of the book shows the effect of her death on the students and staff. Some of them are able to see the way forward and other[s] are confirmed in their passive attitude or active resistance to the new society in Czechoslovakia.

It was because of such notions that Renita, in the USSR (see below), later called me 'honest'. Whilst I – immensely flattered – protested that it was not enough to be honest, one also needed to understand and to be right. Oh, and by 'active resistance' I was not referring to anything beyond state socialism, but to attempts to return to capitalism. At this time this meant to me a reversal of a world historical process, the latter clearly visible to those of us equipped with Marxist spectacles.

## **Colleagues, Friends, Comrades and a Lover**

### **• The Not-Very-Cosmopolitan Brits**

I have already mentioned my new colleague and comrade, Denis Hill (1929-94). Denis was a working-class bloke from then-provincial Brighton, where he spent almost all his life apart from his two or three years in Prague. In his self-description, on the flysheet of one of his books,<sup>20</sup> Denis forgets to mention his Jewish Problem: he reproduced, without qualification, the common-or-garden British prejudices about Jews. And, more in tune with fascist ideologues, he considered the Jews had been co-

responsible for Hitler's persecution of them! I think he made his anti-semitism clear to me the very first time I took him for breakfast at the *mlékárna*. And this without intending offence to any Jew he might be drinking cocoa with. I could only put his anti-semitism down to his provincial background since I had never heard anything like this from a London Communist.<sup>21</sup> The Jews, however, were not the only people he had a problem with. Denis produces a series of national/racial stereotypes of the people he met at the IUS (1989:275-81). I recognise the stereotypes. Indeed, on return from Prague, I used myself to joke that all the stereotypes we Communists ritually denied turned out, in experience, to be true. But for Denis this was a matter of identification with North Europeans, Germans, and Japanese, and of dismissal and even condemnation of South Europeans, Jews and people from the Third World. Maybe, as a Jew, I felt more empathy with other nationalities or ethnic groups, or more interest anyway in their un-English circumstances and struggles.

Within WSN Denis was a good administrator, travelled widely in a hopeless effort to improve its West European distribution. But he also had this vague King Street mission to keep an eye on me. The relevant chapter of his book is entitled 'A Diplomatic Mission'. Further to my introductory quotation above, he said:

It was one thing for London to have such views but it did not appear that my fellow Britons in Prague had been fully briefed [...]. It was left open exactly what role I should play. Obviously I could not discuss this with the (non-British) IUS leadership. It was all very well for London to hope that I could 'keep an eye' on the young editor but this turned out to be not at all easy. Particularly as we should wish to do this without tipping off the rest of the editorial board .... All of them had their interests to pursue, not necessarily to the advantage of the British student movement, and they would therefore be quick to exploit any perceived differences between the British. (Hill 1989:266)

I am sure Denis must have told me he had been given this role since, whilst full of prejudices (concerning women, homosexuals, and open sexuality), he was lacking in subterfuge. He was as disenchanted as I with state-socialism, though not always in the same phase or to the same extent. Thus, when I told him, 1957, that despite all my criticisms, the Soviet Union was (definitionally?) the most democratic country in the world, he ridiculed me. But, then, despite all his knowledge of Czechs, he was still able to say that the 'mass of the people was genuinely pro-Russian' (Hill 1989:307). Like me, he rejoined the CPGB on his return to the UK, leaving this in 1968 (unlike me) because of the Soviet invasion of Prague. His book combines vivid description and reflection with his cracker-barrel philosophising on European history – and a more-strident anti-semitism than he had ever expressed to me. The Second World War becomes, in his book, 'The European Civil War' (Hill 1989:78).

Although his autobiography was entitled *From Red to Green*, one finds little eco-politics in it. I wondered whether it should not have been called *From Red to Brown*. I found it, ten years after he died, in a 'Revisionist' (i.e. Nazi) bookshop in Sussex. From his own account it appears that Denis was increasingly self-isolated by heart disease, other major health problems, by his often irascible nature. He was incapable of giving up smoking and alcohol. He once almost killed himself by attempting, whilst drunk, to vacuum clean a wet floor (with a machine bought in Moscow 1957). Whilst he had travelled much in Eastern and Western Europe, often accompanied by a woman-friend, he now went alone to Egypt and the USA. He abandoned the Brighton Trades Council he had earlier done much to build up. He died at home, aged 65 in 1994. But his death did not go unnoticed in the local press, any more than had his life. And, after all, he did leave behind his own three unique chapters on life in

Prague, the IUS and WSN in the mid-1950s (245-327). Perhaps he wrote his own sad epitaph – though hardly that of the left – when he said:

The leftwing movement, and this includes the CP, seems to attract a fair proportion of the crippled .... Even those of us without any visible physical problem may well have been carrying around an unseen burden. One can be a cripple in emotional or spiritual terms. I sometimes wondered if we were not all the ‘walking wounded’ of life. (Hill 1989:228)

Back to Denis in Prague. He refers, in the initial quote to this chapter, to ‘the name of the game’. For himself, and possibly for the two other Brits who turned up after me, the game might have been one of representing the British Communist Party, or its Student Committee, or, in some way, British students, within the IUS. Now, whilst I myself did think and act as if this was the case, Denis was certainly right in suspecting the limits of my identity. In part this was due to us being Far From London (I recall only one or two visits from the National Student Organiser of the CPGB, one or two phone conversations with the UK, during two and a half years). In part it was due to King Street’s declining interest in the IUS and - as I slowly became aware - in the other international Communist organisations in Prague.<sup>22</sup> In even greater part it had to do with my distance from Denis, Ivor Thomas (from Wales) and Ian Warwick (from Scotland). They were not only 10 years older than me (in my eyes middle-aged), but had had little or no involvement in student politics, being minor unpaid Party officers – with little or no international experience either. Given our lack of any representative credentials, and the marginal interest in us of the CPGB, we were effectively dependent on either some notion of Britishness, on our membership of the CPGB – as suggested by Denis – on some ethic of internationalism, some feeling of cosmopolitanism. I guess that, for me, it was a mixture of such, since I was undeniably British (and had all my family and old friends there), had a second-generation relationship with the CPGB, I identified with the tradition of labour and socialist internationalism, and was now developing a cosmopolitan identity. But, practically speaking, we were all of us highly dependent on the IUS, not just for our jobs and income but also because of our isolation from both the UK and from Czechoslovakia itself. Despite my good intentions and efforts, I never learned more than a smattering of practical Czech – even if this was several smatters more than my colleagues.<sup>23</sup>

There are other interesting elements in the initial quotation from Denis. Firstly that, even though he remembers my first name, I don’t figure in his index. So I clearly did not have a very high profile in his memory. Even a translator he didn’t care for at all is identified here, as Ruthless Ruth.<sup>24</sup> So it seems that I was less important in his memories of Prague than he in mine.<sup>25</sup> This is curious because we not only worked together on WSN but shared broadly similar attitudes to Czecho. And I even visited him in Brighton in the early 1960s when I had to go there for a university interview. Secondly, Denis opines that I was ‘volatile and brash’. Guilty as charged, then and now, though hopefully mellowed by the passing years. Thirdly, that I didn’t go out drinking and gossiping with three stolid Brits, who liked beer and each other more than I did either. Fourthly, of course, that I ‘went native’ with Czech students. This last expression, for those unfamiliar with it, is a British colonial one, for officers who fraternised with the colonised, particularly the female half thereof. Denis’s quotes may suggest irony rather than condemnation, on his part. But, once again, I have to enter a guilty plea.

## • **The Norwegian Babes-In-The-Woods**

From Norway came Tore-Jarl Bielenberg (Norway 1935), just one year older than me, and Hjördis, his

teenage sweetheart, now his wife. She called herself Lily, for the less-cosmopolitan. And we called them the babes in the wood since they looked 16 years old. Tore-Jarl was to be the Scandinavian editor of WSN, Norwegian being the mutually-acceptable language amongst Scandinavians. Hjördis worked as a secretary. Tore-Jarl was a good-looking, quiet, sweet and intelligent guy, with excellent English, and he was already an experienced Communist organiser. Hjördis was also sweet, slim, pretty and extrovert. She came from a Communist family with a resistance background. She too spoke fluent English. Hjördis wore brightly-coloured dirndl skirts and stiletto heels – the first sensational in Prague, the second seriously inappropriate for its cobbled pavements. We all really loved Tore-Jarl, and most of the guys in our pension lusted after Hjördis. Tore-Jarl was only in Prague for a year or so, but because of a similar party background, because he was my age, because he and Hjördis lived right below me in the Skřivan, I guess I was closer to him than anyone else at the IUS. Like me he had no university education behind him. Apart, indeed, from some university-level language courses, he never got any later either.

Tore-Jarl was a child during the Second World War, his wartime experience having certainly marked the rest of his life.<sup>26</sup> He was raised by his mother, herself active in the resistance. On one occasion she took him with her whilst acting as a courier. She also taught him how to look after himself in case she was arrested. Tore-Jarl was acutely aware of what was being done to Norway's Jews. His former school was being used as a concentration camp for Soviet prisoners. He witnessed one being terribly beaten by an SS man for picking up food Tore-Jarl had thrown over a fence to him, and was then threatened with death by this prison guard himself. Out of *Signal*, the Nazi army magazine, he tore a reproduction of a Soviet prisoner's Communist Party card, sticking his own photo over that of the Russian. After the war, his mother's activity in the Norwegian-Soviet friendship society enabled him to see all the famous Soviet movies. When he was 15 he joined the Young Communist League. At 16 he was chair of the YCL in a working-class area in Oslo. His political activities got in the way of his high-school education. But every summer he would work on building sites, and money earned this way enabled him to study French in Paris.

The Norwegian CP was full of resistance fighters and concentration camp survivors. It had played a major role in the resistance, was the fourth largest in the postwar parliament and was bitterly opposed during the Cold War by the Norwegian Labour Party.<sup>27</sup> Tore-Jarl began to play a leading role in the YCL, which had some institutional independence from the CP. In 1953 he was elected to the central committee of the YCL. It was the YCL through which he went to the Berlin Youth Festival of 1951, to Eastern European youth camps and then to the IUS.

Tore-Jarl recalls the Norwegian edition of WSN as having had some impact in the Scandinavian world, and of receiving considerable friendly correspondence from readers.<sup>28</sup> At the time of the Hungarian uprising, however, a Norwegian student paper condemned him for his association with the IUS, suggesting that he would be dealt with on the Day of Judgment. Although the Norwegian edition of WSN had been running for a long time, the IUS decided that a Scandinavian edition was something of a luxury, so his short editorship came to an end. Like Jiří Pelikán and me, he seems to have been highly motivated by the anti-colonial activities of the IUS. His solidarity feelings for Russians and Jews were hereby extended to a continuing solidarity with the Third World. Because of the relative isolation of Norway, Tore-Jarl's first experience of living and working abroad, and getting to know a wide range of people from different countries was an eye-opener. He was close to the Indonesians, to North and West Africans and accumulated invitations to visit their countries. But, 'one by one they were killed'. Tore-Jarl reports the customary experiences of us Westerners in Prague and the IUS. One

was when a Czech woman who had asked him to give her Norwegian lessons, evenings at her empty school, then asked him to jump out of the window when she thought she heard someone in the corridor. On another occasion, he was asked by Pelikán to follow up in Vienna a story by an Austrian Communist about the exploitation of Hungarian student refugees there. On his way back the border was closed to normal traffic because of some attempted escape and shooting, so he hitched a ride over the border with a friendly Czech engine driver. He wrote up his story in Prague but it never got published in WSN.

Tore-Jarl returned to Oslo via Moscow, where he was an intermediary between the Moscow Youth Festival Committee and the Norwegians. (It was also through Tore-Jarl that I was able to buy for roubles a hand-knitted Norwegian sweater I still have). For the next decade he was something of a professional revolutionary, whether working for the Norwegian Party's publishing house, chairing the CP student organisation, or organising the first Scandinavian-African Student Congress. However, he also worked several times in Moscow, whether on the Norwegian section of Radio Moscow, or as a correspondent for the Norwegian CP newspaper, *Friheten*. He made journalistic trips to Spitsbergen in the Arctic and to Vietnam. In Moscow he was in touch with dissident, Jewish and Gypsy (Romany/Sinti) communities. He also, at one moment, led a Norwegian Communist delegation to the Soviet Union to investigate and report on the position of Jews there. These concerns of his led to the predictable brushes with the Soviet security, though he had some protection from a friend in the International Department of the CPSU in Moscow. Tore-Jarl's interest in the Gypsy community led to his second marriage, this time to a Soviet Gypsy singer, for whom he acted for a decade or more as a manager, travelling with her and a band throughout Western Europe. Within Norway he was a leading specialist and activist on Gypsy rights. His concern with Jewish questions also led to activity within the Norwegian-Israeli Friendship Association. In the 1980s, whilst involved with and serving as a translator for Nordic Peace Marches to Moscow and Paris, he met his third wife, a Norwegian peace activist, with whom he lived for a decade or more before she tragically died.

Tore-Jarl's combination of political commitment, organisational skills and a conciliatory personality appealed, evidently, not only to the Communist movement, but also to the Norwegian Labour Party. At one point this tried to recruit him for a leading position. He remained, however, loyal to the CP. The Norwegian state, governed for much of the twentieth century by the same Labour Party, kept a security file on him, as with all Communists, left socialists and other opponents of NATO. Eventually, such spying became a public scandal in Norway. The government was obliged to not only compensate him but also provide him with an extensive, if carefully selected, set of documents from the file it had held on him.

Whilst the Soviet Union was undergoing Gorbachov's brief period of openness and restructuring in the late-1980s, Tore-Jarl received modest funding from the Soviet Embassy in Oslo to produce a Norwegian-language bulletin, *Socialist Theory and Practice*. This consisted of translated extracts and cartoons from the increasingly open Soviet press. But the collapse of the Soviet Union and the increasing divisions amongst the remaining Norwegian Communists led finally to Tore-Jarl's abandoning his lifelong attachment to both. He increasingly earned his income as a translator from Russian, German, English and French into Norwegian. Amongst such translations from English have been books by the US black Communist, Angela Davis, and the socialist-feminist Barbara Ehrenreich. Most recently he has divided his time between Oslo and Paris – and with writing based on his own life. He still has a wide and cosmopolitan circle of friends, with whom he celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in Oslo, 2005. Tore-Jarl is a survivor of not only Communism but a series of personal traumas that he

would certainly not want publicised.<sup>29</sup>

## • **The Icelanders, Ebullient and Reserved**

Vilborg (Villa) Harðardóttir (1935-2002), best friend of Hjördis, was the wife of the Icelander Árni Björnsson (1932-) one of the few representatives of a Western student union at the IUS. Árni was somewhat introverted, though by no means taciturn. He had a very unusual face, suggesting to me his descent from the Icelandic trolls in the sagas he later became an expert on. Villa worked at the IUS in some journalistic capacity – though not for WSN. She was very blond and very pale, beautiful, slim and extrovert. Both Árni and Villa were Communists. She was also clearly her own woman, since she left the infant Mörður with Árni to join Zuzana (see below), Ivan and me on our hitch-hiking trip to Slovakia.<sup>30</sup> On reading, later, *Salka Valka*, the novel of Icelandic Nobel Prize winner Halldor Laxness, I realised that Villa had something of Salka's independent, enterprising and fighting spirit. Unlike Salka, Villa was not just a fighter but warm-hearted and with a great sense of fun. Árni eventually got a PhD in Icelandic language and cultural history, taught on these at the universities of Greifswald (German Democratic Republic) and the Free University (West Berlin) 1961-65. He became a department head at the National Museum, publishing extensively on Icelandic folklore. Árni and Villa had two or three other children but later separated on friendly terms. After graduating in English and Norwegian in Iceland, 1962, Villa seems to have worked as a Communist journalist, as a teacher (also of journalism), as head of a school of adult education, as an editor and public relations person for the Institute of Technology, and as the Director of the Icelandic Association (1992-2002). She was twice a stand-in for Members of Parliament (1975-78), and once represented Iceland in some capacity at the United Nations. She was also a founder, around 1960, of the Icelandic Red Stocking feminists, co-organised the protest against a Miss World contest (by releasing cows into the hall), as well as the first Icelandic Women's Strike, 1975. She became a close friend of my wife, Ruthie, visiting us several times in the UK and the Netherlands. Villa travelled extensively but was quite fanatically attached to Iceland (almost a requirement for living on a volcanic rock, hundreds of stormy North Sea kilometres from anywhere). Villa had long had a congenital heart problem and died on one of her many trips, amidst the Icelandic nature she so much loved.<sup>31</sup>

## • **The Romantic Italian**

From Italy there was Carlo Ripa di Meana (1929). Carlo, a tall, slim and soulful-looking Italian, some years my senior, claims, though I do not recall this, to have been Editor in Chief of WSN, 1953-56 (Ripa di Meana 2000). When I introduced him to Ruth Loshak, at the Warsaw Youth Festival, 1955, she said to me, somewhat breathlessly, 'Who is that beautiful guy?' There were three problems here: firstly, Englishmen at that time had no notion of male beauty, secondly, it had not occurred to me that he *was* beautiful, thirdly, I was turning green with envy as she said this. Carlo came from a family of aristocrats.<sup>32</sup> He had dropped the 'Ripa di' when he became a student Communist. I envied Carlo's capacity for flattery, as with one of the mature Czech women staff, with bruised-looking eye sockets, to whom he commented – looking deeply into them – on her dark, romantic looks. Carlo did not live in our pension but had a room somewhere else in Prague. This might have been due to the semi-diplomatic status of the Italian CP in Czecho at this time, since the Italian state did not recognise the Czech state, and the latter was secretly supporting an Italian CP radio station (or maybe the causality was reversed). Carlo had had to travel to Prague illegally, and with the use of some Czech *laisser-*

*passer*. He told me about his relationship with a Czech woman who had thought she was saving him from suicide on Charles Bridge, though he was only leaning on it, looking, I seem to recall, at the window of some other woman. From one of his relationships in Prague, Carlo had a daughter, Barbara, it being a later source of sorrow to him that when she had grown up they had met but once. Carlo kept Latin office hours, losing his temper with me on only one occasion, this being when I complained about him for not turning up on Czech or English time in the mornings. Carlo was also an object of envy for me when he got on the IUS delegation to Vietnam. His WSN report, mentioned above, is rather less interesting than his recollections of the trip a half century later (Meana 2000:68-75). Obviously, the latter are more critical. But they are also more personal, not to say erotic, recording his brief encounter on the train with a young woman diplomat from the Ukraine. He records, also, reading on his journey, the Graham Greene novel, *The Quiet American*, which he must have borrowed from me. This book was a straw in the wind of growing British intellectual revulsion against – and guilt about – the Western role in Vietnam. Neither in the one account or the other, however, do I find Carlo's discovery, in Beijing, I think, that Italy was not the cradle of civilisation, nor Rome the centre of the universe. Or at least that it was not universally recognised as such. However hard he tried, he could not find a way of communicating the existence of either to his Chinese interlocutor.

Carlo travelled, as an IUS representative, all over the world. Maybe this is why I do not recall him as Chief Editor. He later classified his official trips into 'three types: without results; with some results; ritualistic' (Meana 2000:63). My problem was that, as chief sub-editor (self-designated), it was difficult for me to get on any but the ritualistic ones. If my rare trips went beyond this they had to be made non-ritualistic by myself, or to be made in my own time. Carlo once confided to Igor and me that, as a child in the fascist children's organisation, he had had his cheek patted by Mussolini and refused to have it washed for a month. We were duly impressed. On his departure from Prague I gave Carlo my tweedy English tie, which he still had in Milan ten or twelve years later. When Carlo returned to Italy he became editor of the new youth or youthful paper of the CPI, *Nuova Generazione*. This was one that, in the wake of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, was also given some latitude by the Party. One major article presented Carlo's own reflections on the Communist world, illustrated by a full front-page reproduction of my photo of the Stalin monument. This job turned out, however, to be a step on his way out of the world of Communism. Igor, once again revealing his warm heart, said he was sure Carlo would return to the Party. More familiar with the changed environment for Communism in Western Europe, I shook my head in doubt.

Reflecting on his three years in Prague (Meana 2000:60), Carlo presents it in terms of a loss of youthful innocence and Communist conviction. For him, Prague had been his university. Whilst he rejected the option of those who, like Arthur Koestler, switched identity from East to West, he clearly went through an evolution beyond Communism that I began to make ten years later. From the CPI Carlo moved to management of a Feltrinelli bookstore, till around the mid-sixties. He joined the Socialist Party (PSI), was Secretary of the Turati Club and a Councillor for the PSI in the Lombardy region. He was thus able to continue his comradeship with Jiří Pelikán. In 1974-48 Carlo was President of the Biennale of Venice, causing some minor international diplomatic scandal by hosting there an exhibition of East European dissident culture. He later became a Socialist representative to the European Parliament, and a Commissioner for Culture and the Environment at European level. 1992-93 he was a Minister for the Environment in Rome. And he then became a leader of the Italian Green Party and a representative of the Greens in the European Parliament. When I finally caught up with him, in 2002, whilst at the European Social Forum in Florence, he was a Councillor for the Greens in the regional assembly of Umbria in Perugia. By this time he was some 73 years old – with

no apparent plans for retirement. But, then, he had already written his own political-personal autobiography, with photos of himself with, amongst others, the editors of WSN, the French actor, Gérard Philipe, with Ho Chi Minh, later with leading Italian and international cultural figures and politicians – mostly of the left. Even later we see Carlo on a human rights mission to Afghanistan, with Willi Brandt, the Polish pope, Václav Havel, Prince Charles and the Queen of Belgium. Many photos show him with his wife, Marina, apparently a *contessa*, associated with the world of fashion. Although he seems to have thus moved himself into a world of celebrities, the last photo shows him in a cage, making publicity for an animal defence campaign. He was certainly still a man of the left, though apparently more of a conservationist than an anti-capitalist Green. And possibly more of a loose cannon than the unleashed dog that his autobiographical title suggests.

## • The Overcoated Soviet

Lenin once described George Bernard Shaw as ‘a good man fallen among Fabians’. Igor Biriukov was a good man answerable to Moscow. Where all the other editors cheerfully reproduced their national stereotypes, Igor was Germanic rather than Russian. He was also the only one who came into the WSN office wearing an overcoat, a trilby hat and a suit. We once sewed threads across his hat so he couldn’t put it on in the evening when he left. We teased him also in other ways. We invited him and his lovely young wife, Valentina, to a party at the Skřivan, where we had pasted together a life-sized reproduction of Bridget Bardot, printed over six or eight pages of the British *Daily Mirror*. This was a case of *épater le bureaucrat*. Igor looked suitably disconcerted. I was fond of Igor. He was a tough and good-looking little guy, who could take a joke against himself but was constantly worried about what would later be called ‘political correctness’. I also respected him because he had joined the Soviet Army as a teenager at the beginning of the war, and fought all the way through, ending up as a tank commander, somewhere in Central Europe. I think I saw him most spontaneously committed whilst interviewing a participant in the Prague student protests of November 17 1939, against the Nazi occupation. This was the event that gave birth to International Student Day and to the later siting of the IUS in Prague (Vol. 10, No. 11, 1957).<sup>33</sup> The guy he was interviewing was of his own generation, a Communist, and another participant in the struggle against the Nazis. Every now and again Igor would reveal an unofficial side to his personality, even if this wasn’t always to my liking. On one occasion, thus, we were arguing about Soviet science and I was ridiculing this Soviet woman doctor, who had been lionised for having discovered some medical breakthrough, but recently exposed as a fraud. ‘Well’, said Igor, ‘but she was not Russian, she was a Jew’. I was profoundly shocked, said so, and Igor apologised. On another occasion he told me how, as a Soviet soldier in Austria or Germany, they had discovered, and tried out, an apparently alcoholic drink, *Kölnerwasser* (Eau de Cologne). In Vienna, on behalf of WSN, he had seen the American movie, ‘Seven Brides for Seven Brothers’, and been entirely enchanted by the song and dance. And then, sadly, when the Soviet Army re-invaded Budapest during the uprising there, Igor, shocked, said, ‘They shouldn’t have done that’.

Some years later, in London, when he was the correspondent for *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, Igor and Valentina invited me and Ruthie, my wife, to eat at their place. We had *zakuski* (appetisers) and drinks, eating substantially as time passed. I had already finished my meal when Valentina brought in the soup, shortly to be followed by two or three more courses. I then remembered that the same thing had happened to me when I had once been invited to their place in Prague. Valentina had a new baby with her in London and asked Ruthie, out of his hearing, whether – as Igor repeatedly assured her – the milk in England was unaffected by current Soviet nuclear tests. Later, Igor became an official of the

Soviet Embassy in London with the task of liaising with the CPGB.<sup>34</sup> Here he tried to reconcile the CP to the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Later he was picked up in a British sweep of Soviet personnel in the UK, the pretext being that these were all KGB agents. If Igor was one then, it occurs to me, he might have been so also at IUS. On the other hand, if he was, he was the nicest KGB agent it has ever been my fortune to meet.

## • The Bouncing Czech

We were lucky to have Jiří Pelikán (1923-99) as our General Secretary since he was a person who had become a Communist as a teenager during the Nazi occupation, when this required the maximum of personal conviction, initiative and courage. With his head of black hair and thick eyebrows he looked more like a Southern European than a Northern Slav. He had a quick mind, was multilingual and had a disarming smile. He was an excellent diplomat. He also seemed to have a place in his heart for myself as a dissident *avant la lettre* or at least as a Communist both volatile and brash. He introduced me to his blind dissident Communist friend, Klement Lukeš (1926-2000), with whom I had an intense conversation at one social event. I guess we would have all thought of ourselves as ‘democratic’ Communists, though the term used by the international Communist movement at that time would have been ‘revisionist’. In the 1960s both Pelikán and Lukeš were to fall foul of the still profoundly Stalinist Czechoslovak Party apparatus (Pelikán 1975:146).

Pelikán revealed an independent personality in the first of two articles he did for WSN on an official trip to Canada. At a time of closed doors in the USA, this invitation to North America was quite a coup for our otherwise anathemised or banned organisation. Pelikán’s first article was entitled ‘Where the Toasts are Made with Water’ (Vol. 9, No. 12), and expressed, in part, a European sophisticate’s amusement at this outpost of Anglophone protestant provincialism. The second part, regrettably, ran heavily back downhill into international Communist form and content.

When I arrived in Prague, Jifí was making efforts, with lessons in his office, to add fluent English to his various other languages. And I was making efforts to develop a personal friendship with Jifí, more or less obliging him to invite me to a meal at his apartment. Here his attractive wife - in theatre or ballet? - preserved a distance that possibly prefigured their eventual separation. He also tried, at my request, to find me a room outside our pension, in a Czech apartment. But when it turned out that this room would have required me to walk through theirs I was saved from the necessity of actually leaving the isolated but familiar ghetto of us foreign Communists.

Though I never felt that Jifí was a personal friend, this does not mean he was not friendly. To my acute embarrassment he came to see me, ill, in the Hotel Graf (before it became Kriváfi), shortly after my arrival. This was because I had been in bed with some IUS virus and hadn’t written to my mother for a month; and she had phoned him. Having just escaped parental tutelage and got my first adult job, this visit was more than somewhat humiliating. Jifí also had to rescue me one Sunday from a street brush with the authorities. On this occasion I had been pointing my camera around a square in the Malá Strana (the Little Quarter, on the other side of the Vltava). This was one of so many enchanting places, which could well have featured later in the 1984 Mozart movie, *Amadeus*, made by the Czech-American director, Miloš Forman. In the mid-1950s, unfortunately, it was at least in part occupied by some branch of the military or security. It took some hours before the officers were persuaded by Pelikán, who had had to come by taxi, to release me. I had already communicated to them that I had not actually *made* any photo. But I still had to hand over my film, months later ceremoniously

returned, developed, with ritual apologies. One New Year's Eve, Jifí joined us in some bar on Václavské, to sing in the New Year as it moved slowly across the continents. Around three o'clock we spilled out into the square itself, where Jifí not so much joined as initiated Czechoslovak folksongs and dances. He ended the night on a spare couch in my room. Such little adventures, as well as my more political peccadilloes, might have endeared me to Pelikán, but not to the point at which he was prepared to make much time for any prolonged discussion. This only finally occurred when we happened to be on the same night train from Warsaw to Prague. But I think that after having waited so long, and familiarised myself with Czech dissidence and dissidents, the value of such an exchange had waned for me. In conversation, his continually wandering eyes always made me feel that his mind, also, was elsewhere.

Pelikán must have been acutely aware of the delicacy of his position. Indeed, he later recorded the sense of liberation that his appointment to the IUS (by the Party apparatus rather than any actual students) afforded him. He had, after all, been both complicit in and threatened by the witchhunt that followed the Communist takeover of Czecho in 1948. If, however, he felt this appointment to be one providing protection from the national witchhunt, he must have been simultaneously aware that any increased freedom from party-state repression had its limits. Perhaps this explains his wandering attention and the nervous tic at Secretariat meetings mentioned above. Two previous Presidents of the IUS, one from Czechoslovakia, one from Romania, had been 'eliminated' from the IUS, the Romanian having 'disappeared' physically.<sup>35</sup> As Pelikán later noted – without further commentary – and in the same passage in which he celebrates his appointment - both were Jews. In neither case, of course, was there any IUS protest. Pelikán (1973:100) reports how, even whilst working for the IUS, he was ordered by the Czech Party to break off his friendship, or flirtation (or love affair?), with a French Communist woman working for *another* Communist front organisation, the World Peace Council. He thus had confirmation, if any was necessary, that his phone was being tapped. And he did, apparently, break off the relationship.

The fact that, despite all the dangers surrounding him, Pelikán was nonetheless prepared to reveal his critical orientation to such people as myself suggests the independence of thought and the courage that came from his formative years as a Communist. He also seems to have preserved his circle of critically-minded Party friends, discussing with them the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU. This was a literally world-shaking event, about which Pelikán was rather better informed than other Czechs because he had picked up the text of Khrushchev's famous secret speech whilst returning to Prague from abroad (Pelikán 1975:107-16).

In the early 1960s, after I had left, but whilst still leading the IUS, Pelikán's independence came back to haunt him. The subservient Czechoslovak Communist Party had evidently decided to demonstrate its qualities to the Soviet one by a virtual repetition of the earlier trials. Pelikán was summoned to Party HQ to explain a series of apparent crimes and misdemeanours (141-51). He seems to have been eventually saved from the fate of various others by, firstly, the Soviet Union being in détente mode and, secondly, his IUS position. By 1960, perhaps, it was no longer as easy as in 1950 for a Communist state to 'eliminate' or 'disappear' an IUS leader. A couple of years later he was appointed, by the Party again, to be Director of Czechoslovak TV. Now, however, the Party was to be haunted for its failure to rid themselves of this turbulent priest: the state TV played a major role in the Prague Spring. And after its suppression Pelikán became a major figure amongst Czechoslovak socialist exiles.<sup>36</sup>

## • The Serious Japanese

I was fond of our two Japanese colleagues, Yuzo Tanaka and Ichiro Ono (1928-). Coming from this exotic civilisation, it was not so easy to relate to them. At that time Japanese students not only behaved but dressed very formally, in elegant blue suits, white shirts and dark ties. The distance between us that I recall had, of course, nothing to do with the Japanese role in the Second World War: my image of Japan was rather formed by knowledge of its militant left, the peace movement and Communist Party. Ono, indeed, was a survivor of Hiroshima or Nagasaki and I recall him having to have regular health examinations in Prague. Ono says of himself:

I spent all years of my boyhood under war, and belong to that generation called in our country 'Showa Hitoketa', that is, born in the first decade of Showa. This generation is said to be an unlucky generation, and it seems to me, tends to die rather young [he was still alive in 2006! PW]. In any case, this generation is not very much used to amusements and hobbies ... and am afraid you will hardly find a bit of humor in my speech. (Ichiro Ono 1991).

I do not recall either of them as humourless, Tanaka being particularly amiable. But it occurs to me that they might have found me or the other Western Communists frivolous. They were, in any case, very serious in their political commitment. Coming from the Zengakuren student union in Japan, these were further exceptional representatives of Communist-led student organisations from non-Communist countries. In an email, Tanaka has two recollections of me:

[One] day I found a notice on the staircase between the ground and the 2nd floor. It was about a forthcoming excursion. It started 'To all the workers of IUS' There were two words inserted by somebody: 'and peasants'. It was probably you. Once a man asked me: which is the country that is most democratic? I answered : 'Well ... probably China. He says: No, you are mistaken just [as] are all the others. It is the USSR, because that is the only country where the social transformation is completed and no private ownership remains. It was definitely you.

For better or worse, both recollections seem to me likely to have been true. From Prague, both of them went to Moscow, graduating in political economy, and both returned to academic posts in Kyoto. Ono wrote me in 1994:

In recent years I am working as professor of comparative economic systems .... Besides, I am committed to some research associations, peace movement organisations ... such as the Institute of Eurasian (formerly Soviet) Studies, Japan-Eurasia (formerly USSR) Society and others.

His wife had become a professor of Russian cultural studies in Kobe. His Prague-born son was, in 1994, a high-school teacher of social studies, his daughter-in-law associated with a leftist women's organisation.

Tanaka seems to have followed a similar career path. And to have remained similarly on the left – even as Soviet Studies became Eurasian ones. His wife and daughter have been both involved in Russian studies. Tanaka has tried to keep in touch with old comrades from the IUS. He was delivering,

by bicycle, the Communist newspaper, *Red Star*. But his main public activities seemed to have shifted to environmental matters. He stayed at my place in The Hague, 2000, during a World Water Forum, whilst I was unfortunately absent. He was at one period Director of the Kyoto branch of the Japan Scientists' Association and a host, in 2004, of a large national conference, on 'The Search for a Sustainable Civilisation'. In 2005 he was Coordinator of a Japanese network, JSA-ACT (Japan Scientists Association-Announce Your Climate Change Targets Now). Late-2005 he attended the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Montreal. And he was busy with his own network and website.

## • **The Smiling Iraqi**

I first fraternised, as earlier mentioned, with the younger, more activist and brighter Western staff at the Skřivan, such as those I have indicated. But I also spent a lot of time with Ali Hussein, the pseudonym of our Arabic editor. He came from Iraq and he did not want one of its series of viciously anti-Communist regimes to know where he was and what he was doing. The only time Ali let his passport out of his hands was on a trip to China and then upon the repeated personal assurance of the Chinese responsible that nothing would be marked in it. It was returned with a Chinese visa form – with a big red star – covering a whole page. He had to get ink-remover from the UK, to carefully wipe this and ensure the page was covered by a more innocuous visa on another trip. I still have a photo of Ali. But, 50 years and many regime changes and wars later, still have reservations about publishing it.

I had met Ali at Regent Street Poly where he was studying economics. Ali, who had a great smile, was severely pockmarked. He explained to me that this was called Baghdad Bite and was due to something in the water supply. He taught me how to cook rice (very slowly so that it developed a brown crust underneath) and how to turn a can of condensed milk into a glutinous sweetmeat (which took even longer). He had learnt how to cook whilst deprived of Iraqi food in England. Ali also provided me with the colonial history of Iraq, with some knowledge of its complex communal composition – here being aided by a handsome and fiery Kurdish Communist studying in Prague. Ali also held a more-nuanced attitude to the Jews than we customarily heard from Arabs at IUS events. In the first place, he explained to me, he couldn't, as a Semite himself, be anti-semitic. Secondly, he said, there had been a considerable Jewish community in Baghdad, and there had been a considerable Jewish presence in the Communist Party. And, finally, he was opposed to Zionism, not to Jews. This left a certain ambiguity about his attitude to a state that was both Jewish and Zionist, but his attitude was certainly more sophisticated than most representatives of Arab or Muslim background who passed through Prague at that time.

It was Ali, obviously, who got sent to Egypt after the failed but damaging British-French-Israeli attack in 1956. More envy from my side since I wanted – at any cost – to demonstrate my solidarity with the Egyptians. Ali wrote up his heroic resistance story for WSN (Vol. 11, Nos. 3-4: 11-12). My brother David was doing his military service at this time, but, because of his Communist background, he was not sent to the Middle East but rather condemned to painting trucks first sand-yellow and then, again, olive-green. On his return Ali told us a wonderful but then totally unpublishable story that had us in paroxysms of laughter. One night he had gone to a cinema where an anti-imperialist movie was being advertised. This turned out to be a Nazi film that the cinema owner had preserved in a can since, I suppose, 1939. It concerned the heroic struggle of a people oppressed by the British, this people being the Afrikaners of South Africa. At the end of the movie, the Last of the Boers raises his brow, bloody but unbowed, to address posterity: 'Yes', he cries, 'We have been beaten now by the perfidious

British imperialists. But one day there will arise a mighty military power that will come to the aid of all oppressed peoples everywhere'. At this moment, the whole audience jumped to its feet, shouting 'Hurrah for Russia! Hurrah for Russia!'.

Ali and I, as young unattached guys, and guys who could not so easily 'go native', could also talk about sex, could lust after and attempt to seduce the apparently willing wife of a Czech who worked occasionally with IUS, and discuss masturbation as an alternative to not actually getting her. Ali had somewhere heard of, and claimed to practice, abstinence, long walks and cold showers. I had not. Indeed, I had found, when temporarily in Alan Brown's room, an English book about sex, probably published around 1926 (as compared with Ali's from 1826?). This said masturbation was acceptable if not practised to excess. It did not tell us whether 'excess' meant more than once a month, a week, a day or an hour. Since I was inclined to excess it was of no use to me at all except to make me more worried and desperate for female company. Ali eventually disappeared into the Iraqi quagmire. And, according to one mutual friend, had abandoned Communism. I made attempts to rediscover him but without success.

## • **The Insurrectionary Guatemalan**

Ricardo Ramirez (aka Rolando Moran, 1929-98) was a Guatemalan Communist who had been involved in the resistance to the US-sponsored coup against the reformist regime of Arbenz in 1954. Ricardo had the advantage of being tall, dark, very Indian and therefore a point of major attraction to the local girls. Since, I seem to recall, he had been previously studying economics in Prague, he had another advantage, that of speaking Czech. There was some sad drama being played out within the IUS since Ricardo had broken up with one of the young women office workers. And in a snackbar just round the corner from the IUS, I was the envious witness to a classical pick-up by him. As we left the place, Ricardo popped back in. On return he explained that he had just made a date with a girl who had been eyeing him. Later, I had a one-nighter with this same attractive and extrovert girl, a dancer in a folk ensemble. However she only knew Czech and my Czech was not really good enough for a second night. Drunk after a party one night, Ricardo drove a borrowed car – an extremely rare commodity in Prague at that time – into a tram, causing, in addition to injuries to himself and his girlfriend, Kčs 6,000<sup>37</sup> of damage to the vehicles involved. That would have been the equivalent of 4-5 months' income for him.

Ricardo was not too punctual in the office despite postponing breakfast till he got there. This meal consisted of a fresh egg, broken into a cup of hot tea. Denis goes into a paroxysm of disgust about this, suggesting that it was some Latin American macho thing (Hill 1989:281). Ricardo had, however, explained to me that it was due to this diet that he had survived hospital in Guatemala, where it was expected that family would supply food. More macho might have been Ricardo's collection of jokes, learned he told us, as a waiter in hotels frequented by Gringos. Two of them had to do with the sexual prowess of a Latino, previously unknown to me, Swifty Pedro Gonzales. Ricardo's experience as a waiter enabled him to also introduce me to such recipes for hangovers as tomato juice with black pepper, salt and Worcester sauce. The latter is an exotic condiment, being pronounced 'Wooster' in English and 'Vortsetser Sautse' in Czech. Needless to say it was ineffective for its intended purpose, though an effective waker-upper on mornings after. Ricardo told us, of course, about his role as a Communist student leader during the coup against the Arbenz regime. He might even have mentioned the name of some Argentinian guy he had shared asylum with in an embassy garage. But, if so, this name would have then meant nothing to me. Che, however, did remember Ricardo:

‘Ricardo Ramirez,’ he wrote, ‘is perhaps one of the most capable leaders of the [Communist] youth .... His general level of culture is high and his manner of facing problems is much less dogmatic than that of other comrades.’ (Anderson 1997:157)

Ricardo had a brown homespun shirt with a Quetzal embroidered on the back. This is a wonderful symbol since it is a bird that survives only in the wild. Plucking up my courage before I left Prague I offered him a shirt of mine, that he had admired, in exchange for his one. But there was no way he was going to risk his Quetzal dying in English captivity. I met Ricardo, some ten years later, when I returned to Prague in the mid-1960s. By this time he was a leader of the EGP (*Ejercito Guerillero de los Pobres*), the most powerful of the Maoist/Guevarist guerilla movements in Guatemala.<sup>38</sup> I had been called up by one-time IUS secretary, Soňa Vávrová, to say that a mutual friend was in some hotel. And there was Ricardo, with his longtime partner, on their way back to Latin America after a visit to Beijing – possibly seeking arms or other support.<sup>39</sup> Ricardo hugged me, patted my back and pumped my arm, thanking me for having been the first to alert him about Stalinism (if not other insurrectionist and dogmatic Marxist ideologies). He later published, with Carlo Meana’s Feltrinelli in Italy, his *Autobiografia di una guerriglia* (Ramirez 1968), which turned out, disappointingly, to be a series of tracts about his guerrilla movement rather than, as I had mistakenly assumed, an autobio of a *guerilla*. Ricardo/Rolando, survived four decades of civil war, co-signed the Peace Accords in 1996, and died one year later. The movement he had led seems to have more or less died with him. I was deeply saddened by his death and furious with myself for not having sought him whilst in Mexico a couple of times in the 1990s.<sup>40</sup>

## • The Film Students

I found the Prague Film and Music School (FAMU), famous for the Czechoslovak New Wave of cinema in the 1960s, through the visit to the IUS of Olga Lisková. She was a tiny, blond, energetic, but not very seductive, student of production, who happened to speak English. Well, she didn’t just *happen* to speak English. She spoke it because her father, who had died, had been a doctor and her parents had encouraged her to learn it (before 1948, rather than after, when it was really the wrong foreign language). Olga was involved in the publication within IUS of *Young Film*. Editorship of this was denied me by my British colleague, Ian Warwick, a man with no particular journalistic capacities or familiarity with film. Now, I had already been a cinema addict whilst growing up in the UK, this being our window on the world in the austere postwar years. One of the worst deprivations for me in Prague was cinema, though I did get to see there the early, devastating, Polish film of Andrej Wajda, *Generation*, before he became famous internationally. Moreover, one of my friends from Regent Street Poly had taken out for me a subscription to the classy film magazine of the British Film Institute. I dreamed of moving from journalism to film, though the idea of another five years in Prague, which could have made this a reality, was too much for me to consider.

The first advantage of access to FAMU was its Friday evening screenings of films not on general release. Olga got some kind of permission, or blind eye, from the Director of FAMU, an archetypical Czech opportunist, whom the students condemned in private whilst applauding at the New Year’s Party. This smiling villain was also a major figure at the Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) Film Festival, to which WSN staff would go in turn for three days.<sup>41</sup> I recall, at FAMU, a US Second World War movie, with an American scratch running from beginning to end to ensure it was not pirated. But this film was memorable also for another reason. At one point a soldier is packing a parcel to send home

and applying to it a roll of transparent Scotch tape. The cream (future) of the Czechoslovak creative intelligentsia issued a collective gasp of shock and envy. Another movie was a North Korean movie of a more recent war. This consisted, in part, of planes being drawn across the screen on visible wires and of Koreans performing the Whiteface parts. It reminded me of the *Punch* cartoon of two Chinese kids reading an adventure book, with one saying 'The cruel pink face and round eyes of Johnny Englishman appeared round the corner'. However, the most memorable screening at FAMU was of a new Soviet movie, *The Cranes are Flying*. This was a war movie, produced 1957, that could be considered, in every possible way, at the other end of the spectrum from *The Fall of Berlin*. A personal story, with its own Sasha and Masha, it had no heroics, no Stalin, no happy end. Equally impressive was the pyrotechnic camera work. At the end, the audience of undemonstrative, sceptical and anti-Soviet Czech film students burst into prolonged applause.<sup>42</sup>

At the film school I met Jaromil Jireš, later to become a contributor to the Czech New Wave.<sup>43</sup> Jaromil, Olga and their friends admired my 'neo-realist' photos of Paris, and then a similar bunch I brought back from a holiday in London. Jaromil also won a prize in a WSN photo competition. But my attempts to seduce Olga were unsuccessful, due to a lack of enthusiasm on her part, and then on mine. They may have ended on a Christmas or New Year's Eve, when my train from a conference in Vienna returned extremely cold and late to Prague. Olga had invited me to meet her mother, in a decent middle-class apartment so under-illuminated as to give the impression that we were taking part in a clandestine event. I seem to remember being served carp – tanks of which, alive, had been all over Prague during the preceding weeks. After an awkward dinner, with Olga as interpreter, we went for a walk in a nearby park. Whilst embracing her I suffered a dramatic nosebleed, which may have been my body's way of telling me that this relationship was also bleeding away. But we did anyway continue as friends. Olga told me what happened to her as a privileged petty-bourgeois child after 1948. She had joined the Pioneers and then the ČSM (Czechoslovak League of Youth), but preserving her doubts. Later, she came to tell me, or consult me, about the unique opportunity she had got of going on a student delegation to the Soviet Union. Since they were going to have little or no Soviet currency, the students were buying their Russian picture postcards with Czechoslovak crowns at *Sovětskaja Kniga* (Soviet Books) on Václavské Náměstí. But what was bothering her was that the security police, the StB, were offering her privileges in exchange for her acting as an informant on her fellow students. The customary response of most Czechs in these situations was to talk yes but walk no (Good Soldier Švejk Our Example?). I would like to think that this was also my advice, since it was the first opportunity she had had in her twenty years to go *anywhere* abroad. She did go, and I did not interrogate her on her return. I would, again, like to assume that she fed back some banalities to her Secret Policeman - who may himself have been not too happy with his informer's role.

Also at FAMU was Rudolf. He was big, dark, morose, and reminded me of a 1930s theatre idol. He made little secret of his anti-Communism. I didn't care for Rudolf but had a sneaking admiration for the courage of his horrible convictions. Rudolf also provided me with terrible stories about the boss of FAMU, as well as of another English-speaking student, Jifí, who would run around after him like some personal servant of an embarrassingly subservient type. But Rudolf was not satisfied with testimony. He also wanted to provide evidence in the form of his working-class friend who had suffered prison at the hands of the regime. With considerable misgivings I waited for them in my room. This was on November 10 1956, at the time of the Hungarian and Egyptian bloodbaths. Rudolf's friend had graduated from the gymnasium (academic secondary school) with him in 1952 but was employed in some chemical plant. He had started up some kind of Boy Scout organisation, said Rudolf. But, as they further explained, this guy had been sticking American flags on car windows, and

had a few 'old guns' at home. They had been charged with endangering state security, and his friends were still in prison. I had been feeling uneasy about having invited the two, fearful that this might rebound on me. But I was caught somewhere between the knee-jerk response, which I eventually resorted to, and some feeling that the dissatisfaction the two in their different ways were expressing was provoked by the nature of the regime. Later, Rudolf told me that he had arranged for a subscription to *Time* magazine to be sent to me so that I could pass it to him. I was furious with him for having put me in danger. And, at the same time, of course, I could think of no good reason why *Time* should not be on sale at kiosks on Vaclavské. Fortunately, nothing ever came of Rudolf's plan.

## • Zuzana

It was in the early summer of 1956 that I finally got lucky. I saw this Czech girl student in one of the offices, and then at the hotel we used as our canteen. She had a beautiful strong face, high cheekbones, straight nose, chestnut hair with a fringe and pony tail, wore peasant blouses and skirts, had a nervous laugh and a crooked smile. She had neat breasts and broad – also peasant? – hips. This was the previously-mentioned Zuzana (1935-96), a student of English. I started meeting her, with a half kilo of cherries, lunchtimes, down on an island in the Vltava, where I tried to charm her by singing English folksongs whilst we dabbled our toes in the water. She later told me that I couldn't sing for nuts but that she had been charmed by my effort. I met her, wooed her and embraced her in the tiny kitchen at the place her friend Milena was looking after for the summer. And, of course, invited her back to my place, where we had to confront or circumvent the dreadful *slečna*.<sup>44</sup> Back in my room I repeated my invitation to her. 'Cover your eyes,' she said as she undressed and I peeked between my fingers. And thus began what was my first adult affair.

I do not recall whether it was before or after we first made love that Sue, as I mostly called her, told me that she was due to be married that same summer. This was to a childhood friend, an architect, approved by her parents, and whom she was very fond of but not in love with. As she left for home, shortly after, I said: 'This doesn't have to do with you and me. It has to do with you. Just don't marry him'. However, she did, though, she repeatedly assured me, she didn't sleep with him. He, anyway, was doing his military service. And, she said, they had agreed not to consummate the marriage until he had finished this. Having a love affair with a married woman was a matter of some pride, anxiety and confusion in my mind. I must, I thought, be grown up if I was having such a relationship. Yet I was not sure whether I believed Sue's reassurances. In the meantime, of course, there was the romance and the wonderful sex (though I really never knew whether she was having the same fun as I – or how I would know if she was). Zuzana was quite adventurous, inviting me to sleep with her in her student hostel when her three other room-sharers were away. And then in the ex-railway workers' hostel, beyond a tram terminus and along a semi-rural lane, in a room assigned to her as a married woman. In both cases I was consumed by anxiety, though evidently not to the point of turning down the invitation. I climbed through the fence at the Albertov student hostel, which was within walking distance of my pension. At the suburban one I arrived carrying an empty portable typewriter case, so that I could use the quite transparent excuse that, at eleven at night or seven in the morning, I was bringing or fetching translation work. The railway hostel was empty but I still had to use the communal toilet and freezing shower facility, and I could not help fearing that Zuzana's husband would get unscheduled leave and turn up in the middle of the night carrying his service rifle ...

Sue was a year older than I, the daughter of a Social-Democratic Catholic doctor who eventually became the Chief Surgeon at the hospital of Mladá Boleslav, hometown of the Škoda car plant, 50-

60km from Prague.<sup>45</sup> Her mother's maiden name was Linke, possibly of Jewish origin. But, in any case, Zuzana and her mother were certainly concealed in a convent during the Second World War by her father's sister, a nun. Zuzana was sensitive about Jews, breaking down when I told her a pathetic story from Sholem Aleichem (of *Tevye the Milkman* fame), retailed to me by my parents from a theatrical adaptation in London. Given the distance between any possible Jewish origins of her own and my second- or third-hand story – which had earlier moved *me* to tears – I was impressed by hers.

Given all the attractions of this relationship, I am not quite sure why it was so difficult and why it came to an end. Our correspondence at that time seems to deal with the difficulties rather than the pleasures. I am sure that I was afraid of commitment. I am equally sure that I was too full of myself and my Communist politics. But Sue must have had her own problems, given that she was actually married to someone else. She once told me she was pregnant. This was when I was just off for a couple of weeks' vacation in the UK, leaving me to worry about this till I returned and she admitting to having wanted to test my feelings for her. On another occasion she was angry because I never even knew that she had been writing stories for this Czech children's magazine. Overwhelmed with guilt, I begged her to show me the stories and promised to help her translate them into English. Although she later did actually contribute to this magazine, she never at that time showed me the stories she had claimed to be writing.

I note, sorting through the photos I have of her, that I have none of Sue smiling. She did have this ironic smile and a somewhat nervous laugh. But she often seemed to me to be hiding behind her public smile. I felt uncomfortable about this and told her so at the beginning of our big adventure, hitchhiking in Slovakia with Ivan and Villa. But this did not mean that I could keep my hands off her, even when Villa was on the other side of her in a big peasant bed – which later turned out to be also inhabited by fleas.

We wrote to each other, particularly when things were not going well between us. She had a lovely round handwriting and expressed herself in an expressive and nearly-perfect English. After she told me of her own writing, I wrote to her:

I am happy for you. At the same time I am more disturbed than I have been for some time.

As I walked back I thought of many things; how much I talk, how many stories I weaved in the air as I walked home from Albertov, the trash I turn out like that radio script – done for a bit of cheap prestige, not because I was really moved to it.

I know you are not yet a writer: I don't have to tell you that you have hard work and disappointments ahead of you. But I tell you that you stand three inches taller for me because you have done something. Now the tables are turned and I feel as if I am an intellectual Communist playboy.

But I have a question: why is it that we have never really discussed literature? Several times after I had lent you books you returned them without comment. I often tried to draw you out but you only made what seemed superficial comments to me.

Please try to talk to me about what you think, what you believe in and what you want to do in life. I want to hear you speak – not just my voice listened to by you.

And for God's sake never say another word of praise to me about anything. What I am I am: my interest is in what I will be and it is only the lash of criticism that can sting me out of complacency....

There may here be echoes of *How Heroes are Made*. Sue wrote to me, late-1956:

First of all forgive me I made such a fuss in your office today. Explanation: I was called on the police station. Wondering what they wanted I was rather afraid they would ask me about our relationship and I wanted to ask you which was better: to let them think it was the relationship of two conspirators against socialism or to assure them it was just an erotic affair....

Fortunately, the police summons had only to do with her lost identity card. Another time she wrote:

I'll never talk to you about this letter. I want to write it, because I think it's necessary, I want to be honest towards you. Not a special favour for your sake, just the normal way of my behaviour towards my friends [...].

I wanted [you] to answer my question – ‘are we intimate friends’ – because we should be not just ordinary friends which meet once a week to talk about the events of the whole time during which they haven't seen each other – we should be something more because of everything which happened between us. I *had* to answer ‘No’, Peter! No, we really aren't. I have intimate friends so I know what it looks like and I really don't know whom to blame.

The cruellest cut of all came a couple of years after I had left Prague, in 1959. I had continued corresponding with Sue even while I was in the army in Germany. Our letters were channelled via London so as not to draw the army's attention. I had written her a letter that was meant to demonstrate my political sophistication and understanding but actually revealed both my personal immaturity and political self-righteousness. She replied:

... your sentences such as ‘write me about all your thoughts and what would you like your country to look like’ drove me simply mad. You know very well that I cannot do that and you know also why because you have spent comparatively long time here [... Y]ou seemed to be slightly surprised that so far I have not developed any hooray-let's-build-up-socialism mood .... I wish you could have never had a feeling that something disastrous is going on which cannot oppose. I wish you would have never to be scared to speak out what you really think [...] After visiting the Festival in Vienna [as an IUS staff member] I came to many conclusions ... .Not because Austria is so wonderful or rich ... but I felt like a normal young woman after a long time again. In fact, for the first time in my life .... And even if I had to spare my money savagely and I was dog-tired, I felt really happy and strong as a horse. I had my really sincere talks with my new Austrian friends in which they told me quite frankly about the situation in their country and did not blame me for my silence [about mine] .... Peter, you cannot even realise how horrible it is when you just [worry] all the time if you did not say anything against the line etc.

I was profoundly humiliated. I knew exactly what she was talking about, since I was living in a normal (capitalist) country and I certainly did not myself want to live in her abnormal (socialist) one. What I apparently wanted to do was to be in favour of Communism rather than living under it. Somehow or other, I managed to restore our friendly relationship so our correspondence continued.

After I had left Prague and Sue had graduated, she gained diplomas in both education and translation/interpretation. She worked both for the IUS and the World Federation of Trade Unions in

Prague. In 1964 she met and married Alun Hughes, a Welsh ethnographer, who was himself an academic specialist on the Pacific islands. He was – still at the time I was writing this – a Communist! But he must have been one who had more respect for her. Alun was considerably older than she, having joined the CPGB in Britain in 1935, the year Sue was born. At the time they met he was working with the state news agency, ČTK, in Prague. Two years later they moved to Wales, where she lived with Alun till she died. On one occasion they visited us in Oxford. This was between my first and second time in Prague, around 1964. Sue eventually published on children's literature in the national Czech children's weekly, *Zlatý Máj*. In Wales, however, she started a whole new career, eventually obtaining a PhD in social work. She worked as a social worker, taught at Liverpool University and for some time headed a department there. She also wrote on social issues in Czechoslovakia, was active in the British Association of Social Workers, and travelled widely in connection with her profession. Alun writes of her last years:

Despite her cancer, Zuzana continued a busy, useful and altruistic life for another seven years [...]. Zuzana's life in Wales was impressive in her achievements, and happy, in a marriage lasting 32 years [...]. Zuzana's ashes were scattered on ... the mountain across the valley from ... the house she had made her refuge and strength. Heather-clad Moel y Parc is Zuzana's 'purple mountain' which she saw as the symbol of her happiness and contentment, living in a region of Wales which daily reminded her of the hills of North Bohemia near her birthplace of Turnov.

## Tourist of the Revolutions

*The European left manifests an arbitrary and ideological relationship to the socialistically governed countries with its discussions about revisionism and anti-revisionism, 'accomplishments' and 'deformations'; and anyone who pays close attention to these discussions often finds it difficult to localise the voices he hears – as though the speakers were ventriloquists from whom issued something like a socialist Weltgeist. (Enzensberger 1976a)*

Whilst working for the IUS I visited, in turn, Warsaw for the Youth Festival (1955), Sofia for an IUS Congress (1955), the Polish Tatra Mountains for the World Student Winter Games (1956ish), and Moscow, twice, in connection with the World Youth Festival (1957). However, I also hitchhiked, with Zuzana, her Slovak friend, Ivan, and with my Icelandic colleague, Villa, to Slovakia. This was before hitchhiking really existed in Czechoslovakia, and enabled me to see the country as it was outside official events and Far From Prague.

- **Warsaw**

I have already written about my professional activities in Warsaw as a reporter for WSN. But I was also looking for Ruth Loshak in the British Hostel. She impressed me by telling me what she had brought into Poland, for friends of her parents: condoms (apparently unavailable under Catholic Communism) and George Orwell's futuristic anti-totalitarian fable, *1984*. What was I supposed to think or feel about these things? In the West I had access to both. And I had no thought about banning either the one or the other when, eventually, the CPGB's *British Road to Socialism* triumphed in the

UK.

Insofar as Ruth was clearly uninterested in anything more than friendship, I took up with the exotic Lydja de Souza Leao, from Recife, Brazil, who struck me with her Amazonian Indian beauty. I had met Lydja in Prague, as she struggled up the stairs at Vocelova 3. She was being treated for TB of the hip at a Czechoslovak sanatorium. We communicated in French and cuddled on the bed in a Warsaw hostel room I shared with some Italian guy – who would repeatedly enter without knocking. Given her health, my shyness, and my lack of access to the condoms Ruth had brought for the deprived Poles, we didn't get any further than this. We remained, however, in contact long after after she returned to Brazil.

Searching for Lydja in the Latin American hostel one day, I was amazed to find several Latin Americans reading the Yiddish-language Polish paper, *Folksztyme*. I was given to understand that these were children of Communist or socialist Jewish migrants to Argentina or Uruguay.

Somehow or other I came into contact with a student theatrical group from Gdansk (Danzig) which had already earned a reputation for satirical theatre and mime. I attended their politically and morally risqué show, went with them to a French one, and we partied together. The theatre group was part of a Polish cultural revival that owed more to the West than the East. Warsaw, still full of ruins, impressed with its innovative anti-war hoardings. One of the Gdansk group, Zbigniew Cybulski, was already something of a filmstar, signed a book for me, and was later briefly famous as 'the Polish James Dean'. Indeed, some Poles were known to call James Dean the American Zbigniew Cybulski.

Although I saw trams at the station with the name of Alec's *shtetl*, Błonie, on them, I could not bring myself to make the brief trip there. Nor did I go on the almost obligatory trip to Auschwitz. I had, as a child and adolescent, seen so many books, photos and documentaries about the fate of the Jews, that I felt I didn't need the extra horror, especially as part of a ritualised visit. I did, however, go to the impressive monument to the Ghetto Uprising, amidst the ruins of the Jewish Ghetto itself. And I did this together with the young festival participants I had picked out to illustrate my WSN story, these including a Polish girl, a German, a Ghanaian girl and a Japanese. Around the site were further hoardings with Nazi photos of their destruction of the Ghetto and of Jewish resistance fighters jumping from burning buildings.

Sometime later I heard of the adventures of some British non-Communist students at the Warsaw Festival. They had actually smuggled out a young Pole, across two borders, hiding him under a girl feigning sickness on the luggage rack. I was simultaneously furious with their contribution to Western anti-Communist media stories and admiring of their brass nerve. Fifty years later a similar incident turns up in the anti-Cold War novel of John Le Carré, *Absolute Friends*.<sup>46</sup>

## • Sofia

I am not sure why Sofia, site of an IUS Council meeting, seems to have left more memories with me than Warsaw. Maybe I simply had more time for myself there, took more interesting photos, and met the enchanting Vera. We had had a 2-3 day journey across Eastern Europe before we got to this small and charming South Balkan city at the foot of the mountains. The Council meeting was a bore, even when dealing with the student press. But no one seemed to notice when I slipped out, caught a bus into town, took my photos, and met these French- or English-speaking students. Amongst them was Vera, who caught my eye not only because she was pretty but because she was the first attractively-dressed woman I had seen there. She was wearing a black top and a rust skirt. She later told me that the clothes

came from family in West Germany. It was a case of lust at first sight since we made eye contact and immediately began to hold hands and cuddle up to one another. Tragically, she only spoke Bulgarian and my few words of basic Slavonic were of little help. We met up in this little bar, opposite the bus stop for the ISS Council site. The girls bravely smoked their cigarettes, explaining that a woman could not do so in the street. The boys helpfully translated between us. Vera and I went into the wooded park opposite the bar. Vera explained her nervousness about petting here with her one word in ... French? ... Bulgarian? ... *pederasty*. I took it that she meant either homosexuals or rapists, rather than child-molesters, but none of these was going to prevent me from doing everything with her *except* having intercourse (I still had no condoms).

The following day in the bar, Vera undid the cotton scarf she had round her neck, which was covered with love bites, which Vera was proudly displaying to the little group of friends and anyone else in the bar at that time. Whether she had discovered them at home before her parents noticed them, I was unable, in my red-faced confusion, to establish. But through translation I understood that Vera was from a pre-war Communist family and a student at the conservatory. I smuggled Vera onto the bus taking us on a trip to the nearby mountains, where the extrovert Latin Americans took charge of the dancing, as well as singing: 'I live in a cabin, like a translator, and no one can understand what I say'. I was heartbroken at leaving Vera, sent her letters from Prague and even – via our Bulgarian, Sasha Yankov – an expensive Czech kashmir scarf. But there was no response. I was left with my warm impressions, an impressive photo of a woman in a market with a Stalin bust under one arm, and with one wonderful front-cover photo that could not be used because it portrayed Antonio Masip, a student leader from a Cuba still under the Batista dictatorship. Another photo illustrated my report, 'Carnations for the Guests' (WSN, Vol. 9, No. 10, 1956). Given Vera's family background, and the woman with the Stalin bust, my impression was of a poor but happily Communist country.

Whilst I was busy with Vera, the IUS staff was – to a man and a woman – busy buying up the amazingly cheap sheepskin hats and coats, and urging me to do likewise. I only got a hat that was rather too small. This was later to my great regret, since the winter of 1955-56 was a record-breaking one in Prague and even my heavy duffle-coat from England was no substitute for sheepskin.

## • Slovakia

My Slovakian adventure was intended to look into and record folkmusic. From my childhood and youth in London and the YCL, I had already absorbed a love of such. My ear might have also been attuned by the Yiddish (mostly East European) songs sung by my father, Alec. Moreover, the Communist regimes were encouraging folk culture, partly to demonstrate their popular national roots, partly in a hopeless act of resistance against 'decadent' Western dance music. But I had got in London, as a twenty-first birthday present, this portable Italian tape-recorder (weighing a good three kilos). And with Ivan, himself a student of folkmusic, and Villa, a lover of mountains, we made an enthusiastic team. In the lowlands and the foothills we stayed in villages known to Ivan. There we were welcomed by peasants happy to display their embroidery and sing their songs. One amazing village consisted entirely of wooden houses, their soft grey exteriors set amongst the rolling green fields and the misty mountains. Here there was taking place a wedding – which continued drunkenly until cock-crow. Disappointingly, the young couple and the accompanying procession were in modern dress. A day or so later we were walking over a pass in the Tatras themselves. Along the way a local offered us a chunk of smoked bacon fat which we roasted over an open fire and ate with thick slices of rye bread, washed down with *slivovice* (plum brandy). When we returned to Prague I tried to

reproduce the exotic experience by frying up the rest of the bacon on the electric ring in my room. This was the first of several lessons that some food and drink – e.g. Pernod – only tastes good in the French *midi*. I had already agreed with the English Programme of Radio Prague that I would do a folksy two-part story on my trip, illustrated by the recordings. Unfortunately, the technicians turned down my certainly adequate and at least authentic recordings in favour of whatever they happened to have in their archives (the Stalin School of Authentic Folkmusic?). However, I did get the technicians to provide me with a tape of my broadcast, which I rewound onto three-inch spools to play on my Italian machine.

- **Moscow**

In January or February 1957 I went with Ricardo Ramirez to report on preparations in Moscow for the coming Festival. And for the first time in my life I travelled by plane, this one being a Soviet Tupolev, with lace antimacassars on the seats of a cabin three-quarters empty. When we landed in Moscow I could not kiss the frozen tarmac but I certainly tapped it with my foot in recognition of finally arriving in the Promised Land. However, this visit followed the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, the wave of unrest in Eastern Europe, and the Soviet repression of the Hungarian Uprising. I had also heard, from the UK, of the publication, in the Soviet *Novy Mir*, of the dissident novel, *Not By Bread Alone*, by Dudinstev.<sup>47</sup> And I was more interested than I should have been – bearing in mind my official status and task – in the situation of Jews in the Soviet Union, and of cautious admissions about this. I also kept a diary, which I typed out in six copies on my return to Prague. It ran to some 50-60 pages – and it was the only major piece of writing I ever totally and irredeemably lost.<sup>48</sup> This diary was written not for publication but for family, comrades and friends – including my new friends in Moscow. Unfortunately, Renita, of whom more below, absolutely refused to return to me the last existing copy when I returned to Moscow, summer 1957. She wanted for herself a document that she considered to epitomise a critical Communist spirit. Ricardo, at that time an unashamed Stalinist, must have been repeatedly embarrassed by my undiplomatic questions but he at least tolerated them.

We went on an endless tour of universities and institutes, with just one to a Moscow factory, to meet ‘the youth’. At this factory I asked about a woman at the gate, who had been doing a very convincing impression of what in the West we would call ‘a beggar’. This, I was assured, was a mistake, since in the Soviet Union ‘there are no beggars’. And – true enough! – when we left one hour later, there was no beggar, no woman, to be seen. In the Stalinist edifice of Moscow University on Lenin Hills, we were met by a distinctly surly and, unusually, unshaven official, who himself gave every impression of being a security agent rather than an academic. He did not take kindly to my critical questions, shouting and dismissing them and us. Our interpreter and guide felt required to apologise for him.

One evening I went off to meet a man I knew of as Henry Rostovsky (1904-90), an old friend of my parents. Henry was a Soviet journalist, previously a Comintern agent, better known to the English-speaking world as Ernst Henri. This man, I later understood, was one of a whole generation of early international Soviet agitators and/or agents from a period in which little distinction would have been made between such categories by those involved.<sup>49</sup> Henry had been the author of two sensational books in the 1930s, about Hitler’s plans for the West and the East (Henri 1934, 1936).<sup>50</sup> The second was entitled, in English, *Hitler Over Russia?*, translated into Russian as *Hitler Against Russia*. During the Nazi-Soviet Pact (1939-41), of course, the book, like Eisenstein’s anti-Nazi parable, *Alexander Nevsky*<sup>51</sup> was withdrawn from the public eye in the Soviet Union. During the war Henry edited the

Soviet Embassy's English-language weekly, *Soviet War News*. This was received and read also by my grandparents. Henry was a Jew, an expert – like many Russians – on mushrooms, and had some stormy love affair going with an English Jewish Communist friend of Ray and Alec. For us at that time he was an uncle figure. Around 1946-47 he left, or was ordered back, from London to Moscow. He had been later seen by my father on one of his trips to Moscow, possibly before he was imprisoned and, no doubt, tortured. Alec told us, at that time or later, that Henry had explained that he would have to report back their conversation to the authorities, something which my father not only understood but approved of. Henry anyway re-established contact with Ray and Alec after his release, thus making it possible for me, with the help of my minder, to visit him in his apartment. He seemed to be now working as a freelance journalist. Before he had left London, Henry had stored in our dank Hampstead cellar an extensive collection of second-hand books, picked up cheap from stalls that were themselves benefiting from the bombing of London. But he also left a collection of research material on fascism internationally, which I read with a sick fascination when nobody was around to ask me what I was doing down there.

So Henry/Henri was something of a mythical figure for me. And something of a puzzle to our minder, who had to be convinced that visiting him was a reasonable alternative to the obligatory visit to the Bolshoi, where *Swan Lake* was being routinely performed. But I had already rejected the other obligatory visit, to the Lenin Tomb on Red Square, since I have never been turned on by necrophilia even if, as in this case, the act was one of the subordination of the living to the dead.<sup>52</sup> I certainly did not use this as my explanation, preferring rather to refer to Henry's friendship with my Communist parents during his wartime presence in the Soviet Embassy.

After the ritual *zakuski* (appetisers), black bread and tea with jam in Henry's bachelor flat, we took part in that other Soviet ritual, of 'going for a walk' so as to be out of range of any KGB bugs. As far as I recall, Henry gave me no state secrets either, rather providing an analysis of the repression and stating that since the death of Stalin things were getting slowly better. I was immensely impressed by Henry's resilience, and whatever explanations he provided me. So was my minder, who came to fetch me at the appointed time, and remarked, after seeing his modest apartment, that Henry must be 'an aesthete? ... ascetic?'. 'No,' I responded, 'a Communist'. I reported back extensively, to Ray and Alec, on my meeting with Henry. And I later let him see the long report on my short visit to the Soviet Union. I seem to recall he was not overly impressed.

In Leningrad we went to the storeroom of some Academy of Fine Art, to be confronted by a morgue of literally stone-faced leaders, either as busts, full-length or larger than life.<sup>53</sup> On Nevsky Prospekt, walking past a church, I took the opportunity of asking our obviously Jewish interpreter *sotto voce* about the position of Jews in the Soviet Union. He, however, was taking no chances with someone he did not know, a foreigner from some international Communist organisation, so replied to me loudly enough for our chief minder to hear. I wondered silently: if things are so good for Jews why do they have to say it so loudly? Also in Leningrad I pressed our hosts, at an official meeting, about the publication of the Dudintsev novel, not yet translated into English, and whether they could provide me with a copy. They replied that the novel was simultaneously sold out and of no possible interest. Thus was I confronted with *vranya*, a combination of the patriotic lie and Irish blarney that requires of the listener only that he pretends to believe what the speaker pretends to believe.<sup>54</sup>

Back in Moscow we visited VGIK, one of the world's earliest film schools, Sergei Eisenstein having taught there. Fortunately, I met here the chubby Renita Grigorieva and her handsome husband, Yuri. Renita, I was later told, though not by her, was the daughter of Central Committee member, Nina

Popova. Maybe it was this that gave her the confidence to talk more frankly with me, in our common foreign language, French. Indeed, she told me, either on this first trip, or some months later at the Moscow Youth Festival, that they had had advance warning about me at VGIK and should be careful of what they said to me. Not that she was going to give away any state secrets either. It was simply that I felt I was relating to a friendly, fat, humorous and admiring young woman rather than some extension of a machine. Her name, Renita explained to me, was an anagram of *Revolutsiya, Nauka, Iskustvo* and *Trud* (Revolution, Science, Art and Work). Much nicer than the names given to Communist children in the USA, such as Lenina or - with more feeling for the poor child – Ninelle. Years later, when deciding between a whole series of beautiful Russian girl's names, we nonetheless chose Tamara rather than Renita. I was to meet up again with Renita, 50 years later in Moscow (see Part 2, Chapter 8).

Back in Prague I had two immediate tasks in hand. One was my day job, which required a story about Festival preparations. The second was my 50-page personal report on the Soviet Union. For WSN, Ricardo did the required upbeat informative piece. I did a piece on the imaginary diary of a British Christian festival participant. This included the passage,

Jean (she's a communist from Leeds but she's quite nice and didn't seem to mind sleeping on such an un-Marxist shoulder as mine through half Europe) on the other. (WSN, Vol. 11, No. 5, 1957: 10-12).

Ruptions in the office, as Igor demanded an explanation and justification for this particular phrase and I tried to explain it to him. My 'Dear Moscow Diary' had been inspired by my own Festival experiences, plus the British Festival film mentioned in Chapter 1, and my continuing efforts to humanise Communism. Finally, evidently, Igor allowed the thing to go through, at least in the English edition.

Nights I was working on my Russian diary, intended mostly for family and friends in the UK. At home, and with newly ex-Communist family friends, such as Chimen Abramsky, it was critically received or dismissed. Ray could not understand how, after all the shit I revealed, I could possibly end with an upbeat note on the inevitable democratisation of the Soviet Union.

Quite.

August we were back in Moscow again, for the Festival itself. This time we went by train, taking umpteen hours, including a change at Čop, just over the border, to the broad-gauge tracks of the Soviet railways. Somewhere along the way we noted Soviet officers, dressed, more practically than elegantly, in their pyjamas for a rail journey that might soil their uniforms. At wayside stations Joy, with her fluent Russian, would help us buy hardboiled eggs, fruit and juice from women with stainless steel teeth, in headscarves and wide skirts. Denis, interestingly, reports both that the IUS secretarial staff were singing sentimental Soviet songs as we entered the 'Soviet Land so Dear to Every Toiler', and that people from previously-Czechoslovak Ruthenia were wishing they could be back under Czech rule (Hill 1989:329).

In Moscow most of the IUS staff were in the university building. But I was supposed to be working on the multilingual Festival daily. So I was on my own in a city centre hotel. Here there was not only the control at the desk below but a *dezhurnaya* (a Russian *slečna*, a combination maid, guard and spy) on every floor, intended to keep an eye also on illegal visitors. One night I had two of these, my old cynical American Regent Street Poly friend, Sam, with his English girlfriend. They were happily

fucking in the bed I wasn't using when the *dezhurnaya*, or the lobby, or maybe the KGB, called up to throw them out. It was not clear to me whether the motive was moral, financial or straightforwardly political.

I was not too enchanted with the newspaper job, since I wanted to be having Festival fun, finding other old friends, meeting up with Russians and foreigners, and walking around the streets, absorbing atmosphere. At the Festival newspaper office, however, they gave me a big handful of roubles, a copy of the Festival programme, and asked me to do a report on the International Student Day. Somewhat puzzled I pointed out that this was not due for several days. They explained that it took so long for the paper to be printed that everything possible had to be written up before it happened. 'But what if it rains?', I asked, naively, exposing my infection by bourgeois objectivism. 'If it doesn't rain in the newspaper,' one of them explained to me, with no particular note of either cynicism or irony, 'it didn't rain'. This was my second lesson in the Stalin School of Creative Journalism. Regrettably, it didn't rain.<sup>55</sup>

Renita invited me to an unofficial private party in a friend's apartment. There was the old Russian ceremony of making-the-visitor-dead-drunk-by-compulsory-vodka-toasts. But I only got drunk. Then Renita started pestering me for not demonstrating my famous honest and critical qualities. I apologised, explaining that I was enjoying myself in Moscow. Her friends pressed me, so I produced three naughty but relevant questions about Soviet politics since February. The students went into a huddle, murmured amongst themselves, nodded, and Renita translated: 'We think these very correct questions, Peter, which our answer is: for hundreds years we were under Tartars!'.

In the meantime, our fundamentally Stalinist French Editor, Romain Markowicz, a young man who already looked and acted middle-aged, was going through his life-changing experience. He had met a Russian girl, maybe simply his first girl, fallen in instant love, and sat with her on park benches. I cannot imagine that they were doing anything more sexual or subversive than holding hands. Maybe they kissed. But they were then picked up, to the girl's terror, by some morality brigade or police and escorted to a police station. Romain returned to Prague spitting blood about the Soviet Union. He did not know what had happened to the girl. I was myself a little surprised that any Soviet girl, even if she had hoped simply to use Romain to get some money or to escape, would sit with him in a public place. But I was impressed at how Romain, a Stalinist, and previously impervious to reason, had been converted by a single dramatic emotional experience.

Whilst all these visits were educating me, and whilst I took or made opportunities to go beyond the officially licensed activities, the censorship of national and international Communist organisations, plus self-censorship, meant my experiences were never made available outside a trusted circle of family, friends and comrades. The little that might have been published remained well within the borders of the, well, socialist *zeitgeist*.

## **Bye-bye Stalin (statues)**

So, after two-and-a-half years and endless postponements, I had to abandon my comfortably-paid but frustrating job. The final evidence of my dependence on the IUS, and its unconcern with the personal lives of its staff, was when I left in 1958. By this time the IUS was giving up on obligatory farewell ceremonies, which would take place with drinks, speeches and a farewell present. So, whilst I got a few crowns (with which I bought a food-mixer for my distinctly undomesticated and totally mystified

mother), I was unable to make my dreamed-of farewell speech. Since I have no notes of such dreams, I cannot demonstrate the devastating denunciation I was about to make. But the home-truth delivered to me by the IUS was clear enough: the rest of my life was none of its concern. There was here an assumption that I was the responsibility of the CP which had sent me to Prague. I had asked for a conventional letter of reference, so that I could, if necessary, get a conventional job on some non-Party publication in the UK. The kind of references the IUS would have been familiar with had become clear earlier when some *národní podnik* wrote to Denis, in Czech, requesting one for a former Czech colleague of ours in WSN (Hill 1989:271). It asked Denis, whom it assumed to be this guy's Czech superior, one question about his 'working abilities', one about his 'attitudes to other people', the rest being about his behaviour during the Nazi Occupation, the 'revolution' (the Prague Uprising, May 1945?), and 'February 1948' (the Communist seizure of power). This was, clearly, not the kind of reference I needed. In the end I had to draft my own, which the new Chief Editor and the IUS President then signed. It might have been both the first and the last time the IUS did so.

I left Prague by the slow train to Nuremburg, January 1958, just before my twenty-second birthday. I never expected to come back to Prague except as a tourist, certainly not as a staff member of another international Communist bureaucracy, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). When I did return, the monument to Stalin had been removed. I had mixed feelings about parting with Sue, my most intimate friend in Prague, the only person I had invited to accompany me to the station. This had been only my second real sexual relationship (I had had one or two unreal, one-night, ones), and it had been much longer, richer and more intense than the one with Adrienne. Sue had been not only my comfort and challenge, nor simply my interpreter/translator in relation to Czechoslovak realities: she had embodied the submission to and resistance against an inhuman and archaic system. At the same time, this relationship had been difficult, and leaving was one way of making our separation definite.

I was relieved to be leaving Stalinist Czechoslovakia. And I was going back to a Britain in which the CP had been adjusting to the shock of Hungary and the consequent loss of membership, in which there was a rising movement against nuclear weapons, and a substantial intellectual New Left. I had bought, with my savings, a second-hand Bell and Howell 16mm, triple-turret, movie camera, with the intention of becoming a cineaste. I took five or ten little cans of East German black and white film with me. But I was going home to no job, no unemployment benefit, no union card (since I had not realised I could have got the IUS to pay my National Union of Journalists fees) and with the expectation that on my return I would be confronted with my two years military service. Having been so much in the company of the university educated, I was also beginning to regret my lack of a university education, though I had no idea of how I could possibly get one.

Arriving back in London two shocks awaited me. One was the surely punitive behaviour of the British customs in charging me £15 for the Czech food-mixer I had bought for my mum. This was pretty much all the cash I had come back with. The second was a phone call from Jackie, my old face-slapper from Regent Street Poly, 1954-55. I knew she had become active in the National Union of Journalists, joined the Labour Party and moved to its left. But I was unprepared for her shy announcement that she had joined the (upper-case) Party. 'Which party?' I asked (lower-case). 'The Party, the Communist Party', she replied (upper-case). I received this news with further mixed feelings. 'But Jackie, everyone is *leaving* the Party'. I said this as if she shouldn't be *joining* the Party at this time. Yet I myself remained in the CPGB for another decade. And Jackie a decade or two longer than that.

<sup>1</sup> My memories of Prague, after a half century, are supported by a number of files. These contain, amongst other things, personal correspondence (mail both out and in), newspapers, original copies of resolutions, translations of such, and even my tiny pencilled notes of a protest meeting held at FAMU, the Prague film school, May 28, 1956. I am impressed, firstly, that the Czechs let me take these out, and secondly that they have survived in good order in a worm-infected filing cabinet I bought as a teenager. As for my habit of copy and filing, this was inherited from my mother. My own memories have been reinforced by memoirs of others, particularly those of foreign Communists who lived in Prague at this time. They are included in the bibliography to this chapter or in that to my second Prague chapter, Ch. 4. One remarkable memoir-cum-history, discovered only in 2009, is that of the Dutchman, Hans Krijt (2001). Hans Krijt, born 1927 in a working-class family, landed in Prague on deserting the Dutch army so as to avoid being sent to re-impose Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia after World War. His stay started in 1948 and continued – with breaks – till time of writing. I have vague recollections of meeting him once in Prague but this must have been during my second stay there in the later 1960s. An interesting parallel to his book is Grossman/Wechsler (2003). Grossman, a contemporary of Krijt, deserted from the US army to East Germany/German Democratic Republic, in 1948. This was because he had been a Communist activist in the USA and feared the army was going to arrest and jail him. He then spent the next 40 years as a somewhat unconventional foreign Communist (non-party) in the GDR. As a Jewish Communist there are also parallels or overlaps with my own story. But Grossman was also a forerunner of mine in so far as he actually attended the first World Youth Festival in Prague, 1947, and gives an interesting account of this (42-4).

<sup>2</sup> Joël Kotek has two books covering the IUS, one in English, one in French (1996, 1998). The first concentrates on students, the second covers youth also. For Kotek, the IUS and associated international organisations of the post--Second World War period, were no more than expressions of international power politics and, more specifically, of the Cold War (extended back to 1917). To this is added the West/South dimension as this became expressed after the Second World War. Communism is presented as an aberration from some West European liberal-democratic norm, world order or process. Consistent with this is his presentation of Communism as primarily responsible for the Cold War – including the funding by the US Central Intelligence Agency of the Western student and youth internationals in the period after 1945! Despite this, Kotek provides a detailed and largely convincing account of the manipulative or clandestine strategies of the Soviet Union and the world Communist movement in the shaping of the IUS. In Kotek's terminology, these involved *noyautage* (entrism), and the use of the *sous-marin* (an individual concealing his/her Communism within a front organisation) and the *taupe* (a mole, secret agent or spy). The *sous-marin* might surface in a crisis, the *taupe* would continue underground. For Kotek (1998:10-13), these two international Communist roles also correspond with the respective operations of the Comintern (later Cominform) and the Soviet civil or military intelligence agencies (KGB etc). Kotek includes a number of fascinating diagrams, one showing the central role of the British Communist, Margot Gale (later the wife of another such one, Arnold Kettle), in British national and international student organisations of the wartime and postwar period. For Margot's memoirs of 1930s student radicalism in the UK, see <http://les.man.ac.uk/chnn/CHNN03NML.html>. Kotek also identifies, as a *sous-marin*, the British medical student, Tom Madden, first General Secretary of the IUS. The founding Chairman of the IUS was the Czech Jew, Josza (Josef) Grohman, for Kotek another such entrism – although this 'entry' was, of course, preceded by Grohman's four years in a Nazi concentration camp. Kotek sees the power of Communism as resting in its superior organisational capacities, thus surely understating its ideological, theoretical and ethical attractions.

<sup>3</sup> Others included the World Council of Peace, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the Women's International Democratic Federation, the World Federation of Teachers' Unions, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the World Federation of Scientific Workers, the International Organisation of Journalists, the International Radio and Television Organisation and the International Federation of Resistance Movements. This fascinating list comes from a handbook on Soviet front organisations published by the US publisher, Praeger (Phelps-Fetherston 1965). Praeger was itself exposed, around this time, as a CIA utility. But the information appears to me accurate and the analysis quite balanced.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Madden, Kotek's *sous-marin*, now well into his eighties, surfaced to torpedo Kotek. His massive unpublished memoir, running to more than 50,000 words is an extensive and detailed refutation. It is full of information about himself, as well as several of the major figures indicted by Kotek, including Grohman, the Russian, Shelepin, and others from the UK and Western Europe. Apart from information about individuals and events, Madden helps us to understand the motivations and actions of himself and his contemporaries, free of the language of diplomacy or espionage. He presents a very different story of his relationship with the IUS and Communism than that offered by Kotek. Madden eventually distanced himself from Communism, but not from his youthful commitment, nor from what the IUS was in its early years. His remarkable testimony, which includes biographical information on himself and others involved in the early years of the IUS, will be required reading for anyone interested in surpassing the account of Kotek.

<sup>5</sup>I will be shifting between 'Czechoslovak' and 'Czech', only using 'Slovak' when wishing to distinguish between this part of the whole (now an independent nation state). Within the Czech lands distinction is often made between the Bohemians in the West and the Moravians in the East, Pelikán being one of the latter.

- <sup>6</sup> This was my own perception at the time. But it is reinforced in detail by Kotek 1998 (220-21). I recall, around 1980, entering an Amsterdam hall where a Communist-sponsored international antiwar conference was being held. From a distance of thirty metres I saw this pudgy, be-suited, middle-aged and middle-European figure on the podium. 'That', I said to Ruthie, my wife, 'has just got to be the voice of the world's youth!' It turned out to be the representative of, if not the world's youth, at least of the Budapest-based World Federation of Democratic Youth.
- <sup>7</sup> What was being printed and not printed in this paper at that time is recorded in impressive detail and with great panache by Alison Macleod (1997), who had worked on the *Worker* for 12 years by 1956. It becomes evident that the paper's successive editors and most of its staff knew much about what was actually happening in the Soviet Union and Bloc long before the 20 Congress and the Hungarian uprising. But they could not admit this to themselves and, even if they did, they certainly were not going to publish it in the paper. There was here a fatal contradiction between a democratic identification with the working class in the UK and the 'oppressed peoples' abroad, and an elitist notion that these were incompetent to handle the secrets we kept to ourselves.
- <sup>8</sup> This attitude was shared by Marian Šlingová, English wife of the Jewish International Brigader, Ota Šling, executed in the trials of the early-1950s. Then called Marian Wilbraham, she had been one of the British Communists active in the movement that eventually gave rise to the IUS (Kotek 1996:45-46, 52-3, 68, 71, 90). She spent over two years in a Czech Communist jail, suffered rural exile, felt obliged to change her name, but nonetheless stayed in Czecho until 1968. Both her sons joined the Czechoslovak CP in the later 1960s. In an oddly convoluted formulation she says 'It was my conviction that not the socialist system or any of the ideals of Communism were responsible for the inhumanities and perversions that led me to claim my membership as a Communist, although for some years it meant belonging to the same organisation as that to which the perpetrators of the crimes, including some of those responsible for my husband's execution, still belonged'. (Šlingová 1968:121)
- <sup>9</sup> Reference here is to the English surrealist TV comedy series, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. More specifically it is to the segment in which a pet-shop owner is trying to persuade a customer that a parrot, clearly stuffed and nailed to its perch, is a live one, if momentarily resting.
- <sup>10</sup> Lionel had, however, considerable staying power, becoming, on retirement from political life in Cuba, something of a historian and memorialist <http://espaciolaical.org/contens/15/7879.pdf>.
- <sup>11</sup> I am going, when writing about Czechoslovakia, to use Czech spellings, words and expressions, despite the puzzling accents and diacritical marks. But it also comes to me spontaneously to shift between Czech and English, as we did in Prague. Perhaps I should just say that a *č* = ch, *ě* = ye, *ň* = ny, *ř* = rzh (which I got quite good at) *š* = sh, and a *ž*, as you will by now have guessed, a zh. Czech has more inflections and complications than - who knows? - Ancient Low Icelandic, and in speech runs its words into continuous sentences and is spoken, as one English novelist had it, in a tone of gentle reproach. The latter, no doubt, is due to the Czech lands having been at the crossroads of Europe, well-placed for being run over by Austro-Hungarians, Germans and Russians (twice), to its desire to resist the invaders, and its resentment at being dominated by larger and more backward powers with fewer cases in their languages than Czech (12).
- <sup>12</sup> Carlo (Meana 2000:52-3) reports a conflict that occurred before my arrival. This had to do not with any contemporary event but with his proposed reproduction of a poem by the French surrealist, Robert Desnos, who had died in a Nazi concentration camp. Already in page proof, publication was censored, for the customarily obscure reasons, by the Soviet representative at the IUS, with Igor as bearer of the bad news.
- <sup>13</sup> Other revealing photos, obtained from a Czech photographer, can be found in the chapter devoted to the Majáles by Matthews (2003:73-7). This book, by someone earlier incorporated into the Cold War on the American side, gives the most detailed and evocative English-language account of the protest wave in Eastern Europe in 1956.
- <sup>14</sup> Pelikán (1973:117) does refer in passing to repression of student protest in Czecho, but not to the Majáles as such. Yet elsewhere he recognises the capacity of student movements to detonate (revolutionary) movements if they are allied with the working class and people (107).
- <sup>15</sup> For another striking image of how Czechslovak socialism was experienced by a Westerner, see Kimmage (1996 and 1998). Ann was the young daughter of Abe and Belle. Abe Chapman (in Prague called Čapek) was a self-exiled American Communist Jew, previously a leading intellectual within the US Communist Party. Abe moved from Stalinism to Maoism, and his family from Prague to Beijing before returning to Prague and thence to the USA. Ann's accounts are intense, distinctive and poignant.
- <sup>16</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius\\_Fucik..](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Fucik..)

<sup>17</sup> My clippings archive reveals that the Werich show was noted in a British daily at that time, under the title, 'Czechoslovak Satire as Sign of Changed Conditions: Comedian Mocks the Bureaucrats', June 17, 1956.

<sup>18</sup> The best-known case of the trials internationally is probably that of Artur London, an archetypical target insofar as he was a Jew, had joined the International Brigades in Spain, then the French resistance, and was imprisoned in Buchenwald. His eventual release from imprisonment in Czecho may have been due to representations by the French Communist Party. His autobiographical account of the trials led to a film by Costa-Gravas, *The Confession*, in 1970. <http://www.learnmedia.ca/productinfo.php/productsid/1182>. For a documentary film on the trials, involving survivors and their families, see *A Trial in Prague* [http://movies.go.com/movies/movie?name=trialinpraguea\\_2001&genre=documentary&studio=TB\\_A](http://movies.go.com/movies/movie?name=trialinpraguea_2001&genre=documentary&studio=TB_A)

<sup>19</sup> Margolius/Kovaly, in her account of her return to Prague from Auschwitz, just before the end of the war, reveals that the suffering of Czechs under the Nazis (1938-45) had had no particularly ennobling effect amongst them. Friends who had taken in her family furniture for safekeeping were aghast at her return to claim it, or fearful of accommodating a Jew whilst the Nazis were in the last days of the occupation. And after the brief heroic euphoria during the Prague Uprising against the retreating Germans, the majority returned to the dog-eat-dog struggle for survival: 'I often thought that many of our people turned to Communism not so much in revolt against the existing political system, but out of sheer despair over human nature which showed itself at its very worst after the war'. (Margolius/Kovaly 1998:64)

<sup>20</sup> Denis (Hill 1991) describes himself thus:

Denis Hill (a.k.a. Rocky Hill) was born and raised in Brighton. He has lived in the town for most of his life, and was educated at St Joseph's, at Vamdean, and at the University of Sussex. He probably knows the district as well as anyone. He was the area's first post-war Labour Youth secretary. Around the town he has participated in youth clubs, film societies, WEA classes, co-operative organisations, jazz clubs, the Brighton Parliament, the Labour Club, CND, ex-servicemen's organisations, the one-time Liberal Club, various trade unions, Bonfire Societies, numerous pubs and clubs, the Veteran Car Run, and countless ad-hoc campaigns and pressure groups. These have included housing-the-homeless, Vietnam protests, free-speech issues, the Brighton Marina controversy, and May Day committees. He has also acted as a branch secretary of the Communist Party, and served on the Communist Party's National Youth Advisory Committee and the CP Sussex District Committee. Originally trained in accounts work, the author later became an insurance agent and spent years working around the farms and villages of Mid-Sussex. He has also worked as an office-boy, travel agent, porter, magazine office-manager, railway-man, office-cleaner, warehouseman, van-driver, and wages-clerk, before going to university as a mature student. He has an honours degree in Politics and a Master's degree in History. The writer did his military service with the R.A.F., including a stint with the occupation forces in Japan. In the 1950s the Communist Party sent him to work in Eastern Europe for three years, which experience included Prague, Moscow, and East Germany. He has also travelled throughout West Germany some twenty times. More recently he has roamed extensively around America. An active trade unionist, he was a shop steward at 17, and has been branch chairman, youth secretary, branch treasurer, conference delegate, and for many years was the secretary of the Brighton Trades Union Council. He served on the Brighton & Mid-Sussex Local Employment Committee for nine years, and (as a co-opted member) on the Town Council's Entertainment and Publicity Committee for seven years. Between 1963 and 1973 he participated in the monthly liaison meetings between Brighton Corporation officers, Chamber of Commerce, and the Trades Council, under the chairmanship of the respective Mayors. Denis Hill is currently involved in: the Electoral Reform Society, the Writers' Guild, the Green Party, the RAFA, and the BCAIR-Japan Association. Like many another, the author paid the price for burning the candle at both ends and in the 1980's underwent triple by-pass heart-surgery. Now approaching retirement, he spends his time as a social-service carer for the mentally-handicapped.

<sup>21</sup> The only other anti-semitic Communist I met was also a provincial. Which is not to say that such views were typical amongst provincial Communists in the UK. For the - more typical - anti-racism of a Northern working-class British Communist with no cosmopolitan background, see Watters (1992: Ch. 10).

<sup>22</sup> This I only really felt when I returned to Prague in the later-1960s. Denis, however, suggests that Jack Woddiss, later Head of the International Department of the CPGB, then working at the World Federation of Trade Unions, was opposed to contact between the British Communists working for different international Communist organisations in Prague (Hill 1989:261). This might have been a crude device for ensuring vertical control of us untrustworthy elements by distant King Street. It might, however, have been due to simple disinterest of either the CPGB or even of those of us in Prague itself.

<sup>23</sup> We were not really aware of the extent to which we were a second generation of British (and other) Communists sent to work in international Communist organisations. A previous generation had worked before the war for the Comintern and its front organisations in Moscow. Had we been so aware, we might have felt distinctly less secure. A number of such British Communists had been caught up in the purges and several disappeared, or re-appeared only after years in the gulags, or were simply executed. The

CPGB never made a public issue about its missing representatives, was ambiguous or weak about confidential approaches to the Soviet authorities. And was unenthusiastic about receiving them back if and when they returned. Textile worker, Margaret McCarthy, returned to London after having worked for a year within the Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern). She asked CPGB General Secretary, Harry Pollitt, what tasks the party had for her. He gave her £2 for the train home and advised her to get married (McLoughlin 2001:210).

24 I think this must have been Ruth Tosek or Tošek, who had been a Jewish child refugee in the UK <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/EventsExhibitions/Community/Belonging/PStories/Families/Loss/RuthTosek.htm>, later known as a translator into English of work on or from the Prague Spring. She may not have responded to the needs of Denis but I recall nothing particularly ruthless about her.

25 I do have to admit, however, that when I began searching for him on the web his surname escaped me. So I tried the following keyword search on Google: <Denis Brighton Communist>. Hole in one! The search identified his two books (1989, 1991), both of which I was able to order on the web. I owe a posthumous debt of considerable proportions to Denis, since his is the only characterisation of myself at that time, and because he either had total recall or archives more extensive than my own. Much of what he writes about Prague has stimulated or corrected my own memories.

26 Most of what follows comes from a visit to the Netherlands by Tore-Jarl, February 2005. We had kept in touch sporadically over the half century but this visit must have been our first meeting in ten or fifteen years. I found it reassuring that our youthful friendship had survived our brief collaboration, the disappearance of the Communist world we had met in, and the Communist faith we had identified with.

27 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist\\_Party\\_of\\_Norway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_Norway).

28 My files on WSN, however, reveal something more complex than the word ‘friendly’ might suggest. This was a long letter from a Norwegian student, Bernard Raguin, dated July 1956. He was presumably a leftist of some kind since he had attended the Warsaw Festival and had a subscription to WSN. He asked:

*Should the Polish or Czechoslovak police one day send bullets into the students (which is not so improbable as they have shot workers in Poznan), would you react with the same viourourness as you have done in the case of Praguay and Guatemala? Or will you call it “foreign provocation”? Or will you contine keeping a strict silence? This is my criticism even if I have put it very strongly but I am sure that the Noregian students will read WSN if they will find there answers to these questions. [Original spelling and punctuation – PW].*

Two successive responses were drafted, apparently by Igor. I do not recall whether they were actually sent. But the second draft reply reads in part:

An objective reader will understand that WSN is striving for a proper presentation of what is really happening in Eastern Europe, as in any other part of the world, and wants to do it in the future better and more profoundly. It is hardly possible on the basis of this to conclude with one-sidedness of WSN .... As far as your hypothetic questions on students and police in Poland and Czechoslovakia are concerned we do not think it is necessary to answer them and are convinced that the best answer will be given by life itself.

It was.

29 Tore-Jarl’s later appearance on the web showed him combining two old interests, in the Roma and in student internationalism, <http://www.isfit.org/news/articles/128>.

30 Mördur seems to have survived this and other parental adventures and was, at time of initial drafting of this chapter, a member of the world’s oldest parliament for its major left political party. I owe this information to Árni, who has provided me with other information about Villa, himself and the peculiarities of Icelandic student Communism in East Europe. I quote from a letter of Árni:

I don’t know, if you ever heard about the Icelandic ‘student colonies’ in the ‘Socialist States’ in the fifties and sixties. Our charismatic [Party] leader at that time, Einar Olgeirsson, somehow managed to convince his old colleagues (he studied English and German Literature and History in Berlin in the twenties) that Iceland was in fact still in a ‘colonial state’, and they should offer them scholarships like the colonial students. He hoped to get back good educated Marxist future leaders. Most of these Icelandic students went to GDR, but they also were in CSSR, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, USSR and China.

But those Icelandic socialist students were different from the normal colonial ones. They came from a Western welfare state, most of them were idealists, and they soon became critical of the 'real-socialism'. They started to write each other letters, which gradually developed into duplicated 'reports' where they tried to analyse and compare the situation in each country. The main activity was 1957-1961, so Villa and I were part of it. In 1962 a collection of these reports was stolen from one of those, who by then had returned home, and before the next elections, distorted extracts were published in the main conservative organ. It was a political scandal, and the old leader was very mournful.

But I think, these 'reports' were rather unique at that time. They were written by young socialists, who lived in 'socialist' countries, and most of them didn't stop being socialists, but became 'Euro-communists'. Some of them later became active politicians, MPs and ministers. A dissertation in Modern History has been written about this at the University of Iceland.

<sup>31</sup> Villa and I had discussed at one time doing a collection of memoirs of Prague. So this book has to be considered a tribute to a great national and internationalist spirit.

<sup>32</sup> Searching for Carlo twelve years later in the Rome phone book I found the number of an Admiral Ripa di Meana, who fortunately spoke English and provided me with a phone number in Milan for his young relative.

<sup>33</sup> November 17 was an event and date fought over between Communists and Anti-Communists, nationally and internationally, something I was not aware of at that time. See Radio Free Europe (1959) for a document that condemns the role of Pelikán here.

<sup>34</sup> This is according to a detailed account by CP official, Reuben Falber (1995).

<sup>35</sup> Amazingly, Grohman, the Czech, survived the purges, protected and employed by old comrades, to later reappear on the political and international scene, only to be again accused and imprisoned in another state witchhunt. He survived this long enough to become a significant informant for Joël Kotek. This passage charts the grim background to Pelikán's appointment:

The Grohman case is exemplary; he spent fourteen years of his life in prison: five years in Nazi gaols, nine in Communist cells. The Budapest Council [of the IUS, 1952] ratified his resignation in his absence. His presidential successor, Bernard Bereanu, had been previously in charge of the youth section of the Cominform. Bereanu ensured the interim until his own withdrawal .... Giovanni Berlinguer [of Italy], previously General Secretary, became President whilst Jiří Pelikán became, as General Secretary, the new strongman of the IUS. (Kotek 1998:288)

<sup>36</sup> Pelikán reappears in a book about international solidarity by David Featherstone (2012, Chapter 5). The chapter is about solidarity with Chile after the coup by Pinochet and the USA. Pelikán, in exile and editing from Rome the underground monthly *Narodni Noviny*, was clearly seeing parallels between the Soviet invasion and the Chilean coup. But he was also suggesting that the *Unidad Popular* regime of President Allende was not only a model of a peaceful and democratic transition to socialism but also, and because of this, an embarrassment to the Soviet Union (Featherstone 2012: 133)! This seems to be a simplification of a rather more complex relationship between *Unidad Popular* and the Soviet Union. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency\\_of\\_Salvador\\_Allende#Relations\\_with\\_Soviet\\_Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency_of_Salvador_Allende#Relations_with_Soviet_Union).

<sup>37</sup> The Czechoslovak Crown (Kčs) had at this time an official exchange rate of 20 to the British pound. Given, on the one hand, subsidies for housing, health and basics, and on the other hand the unavailability of other items, any cash comparison with the UK was impossible.

<sup>38</sup> Here a correction is in place. Maritza Urrutia, herself a one-time EGP activist and a torture survivor, tells me that the movement was at no time Maoist, being inspired, rather, by Vietnam. This is confirmed by the following endnote.

<sup>39</sup> The trip was not primarily to China but to Vietnam, still fighting a guerilla war against the USA! This comes out of the autobiography of his longtime partner, Aura Marina Arriola (2000). She, in any case, was distinctly more impressed with the Vietnamese than with the Chinese. I do recall her as having been present in that hotel room in Prague. But, possibly because she didn't speak English, we didn't talk. She later separated from Ricardo and fell out with Soviet and Cuban Communism over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. She became an academic in Mexico and a much-travelled activist. Her autobio is a rare example of one by a Latin American woman internationalist.

<sup>40</sup> For a piece that mentions Rolando Moran in the course of a critique of guerrilla movement relations with the indigenous peoples of Central America, see Krøvel (2011). It may help explain the virtual collapse of Rolando/Ricardo's movement after it had abandoned its failed guerilla strategy.

<sup>41</sup> I went to Karlovy Vary, 1956, with Ricardo Ramirez. We met up there with Nelson Pereira Dos Santos, director of the first

Brazilian neo-realist movie, *Rio 40 Degrees* (reported in *World Student News*, No. 4, 1956). Also in Karlovy Vary was the American, Robert Carl Cohen, whose prize-winning film, *The Colour of Man*, we featured in WSN (No. 12, 1956). He was a dissident *avant la lettre* in Cold War America, breaking various US bans and vetoes, particularly those relating to contact with Russia and China, later with Cuba. For his filmography see [http://www.radfilms.com/cohen\\_filmography.html](http://www.radfilms.com/cohen_filmography.html). We rediscovered each other only around 2012.

42 The second time I saw this movie was over 50 years later. I was enchanted to find it amongst the ‘classic’ movies in the Polvos Azules market in Lima, where I went seeking pirated video films. This time round it came over as somewhat formulaic and over-dependent on early-Soviet film techniques. As a courageous, if lonely, break with the Soviet heroic mode, however, and with its daring exposure of home-front corruption during the ‘Great Patriotic War’, it retains its historical significance. Khrushchev, whose party/state must have approved the release of the film during a thaw in the Soviet Union, was said to have described its heroine as a whore. That’s the kind of thaw it was.

43 In 1968 Jaromil directed the film of Kundera’s bitter comedy, *The Joke*. This was one of a whole series of ironic, satirical, farcical, anarchistic or otherwise subversive movies which I saw in Prague during my second stay there. I regret not having sought Jaromil on my return to Prague since he later died following a car accident.

44 This was the concierge of our pension. A half century later, I realise why Mrs Tweedie, the chicken farm *gauleiter* in the animated escape/emancipation movie, *Chicken Run*, rang a bell for me. *Slečna*, less enterprising and violent than Mrs Tweedie, had something of the same presence and screech. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicken\\_Run](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicken_Run).

45 I am indebted to Alun Hughes, Zuzana’s husband for over 30 years, for details about her life before and after our relationship.

46 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolute\\_Friends](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolute_Friends)

47 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir\\_Dudintsev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Dudintsev)

48 Well, for 50 years anyway. See Part 2, Chapter 8.

49 The distinction is, of course, made in the title of this chapter. It is drawn from the argument of Eric Hobsbawm (1988), in which he talks about two generations of internationalists in these terms. His agents were, implicitly, those of parties and states, particularly of the Soviet party/state. I have elsewhere added a third, contemporary, generation – the communicators. But I have also suggested that these three types could also be seen as modes of internationalist activity co-existent, to differing extents, within the three identified periods (Waterman 1999a). Like Henry, some of these brilliant and courageous Soviet agents were either ignored when their information was not to Soviet taste, abandoned, arrested on return to the Soviet Union, and/or publicly challenged as to how they could possibly have survived fascist prisons or camps when so many others died. In the medieval atmosphere of the witchhunts, of course, nobody dared to ask how the accusers themselves could have survived.

50 Although it had much effect at that time, due to its impressive documentation, and the argument that Hitler was an expression of the interests of monopoly capital in Germany, it was later dismissed as propagandistic by the rightwing Walter Laquer (1990/1965). Later still I discovered from the post-Soviet *Pravda* that Henry’s real name was Semyon Rostovsky (born 1904), and that his life and works were publicly celebrated in 2004! The *Pravda* account may not be full or accurate, but it did confirm my assumption that Henry had been an agent. Moreover, there is a suggestion that he was involved with the armed Communist uprising in Germany, 1920. *Pravda* states that when he was arrested, on his return to Russia after the Second World War, he was accused by Stalin’s minions of being pro-Hitler before the war and a Western agent after. How, otherwise, could he have been so well informed about Hitler’s plans? He was released after a relatively short imprisonment, and after having been tortured, in the Lubyanka. For this release he had no doubt to thank the death of Stalin.

51 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_Nevsky\\_%28film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Nevsky_%28film%29),

52 My feeling about mausoleums – or should that be mausolea? – is only reinforced by reference to Wikipedia, which says the following:

In the analytic social psychology of Erich Fromm necrophilia is a character orientation which shows an increasing tendency toward destructiveness. Used in a non-sexual sense Erich Fromm understood necrophilia as an everyday behaviour which is not an expression of a biologically fixated death instinct, but the consequence of a life without being really alive. For Erich Fromm necrophilia is the opposite of biophilia. The lack of love in the western society leads to necrophilia. Symbols of the necrophile are facades made of concrete and steel, modern weapon systems, the idolatry of the

technology of the megamachine (technophilia), the wasting of resources in consumerism and the treatment of people as things in bureaucratism.

Thank you, Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Necrophilia>. And further thanks to my old friend, colleague and comrade, Ken Post, who has worked on the pre-history of Europe, and who turned up the illuminating explanation for Lenin/Stalin being buried below ground level in their otherwise high-modernist tomb. This lies, literally, in pre-modern - even pre-Christian - Russian tradition.

<sup>53</sup> I wonder whether it was here that I expressed my rather too-frank opinion of Soviet design. This is retailed, on the basis of my own diary entries, in the PhD of Nick Rutter (2013b). But Nick also tracks down the disgusted reaction of the institute director who had invited my comments in the first place! That I have become aware of these only a half century or more later, does nothing to decrease my amusement at reading them. For my diary see, again, Part 2, Ch. 8).

<sup>54</sup> This I later discovered through a US State Department publication, *Problems of Communism*. I had maybe the only subscription to this subversive and informative journal in Prague, at least beyond the world of embassies.

<sup>55</sup> I have been enchanted to discover that the Stalin School of Prefigurative Journalism was not confined to the Soviet Union in the later 1950s. In a novel about an isolated provincial city in North-Eastern Turkey, around a half century later, the protagonist is complaining about a report to appear in the following day's paper (circulation: 350):

'I don't have a poem called 'Snow', and I'm not going to the theatre this evening ....'

The editor replies:

'Don't be so sure. There are those who despise us for writing the news before it happens .... You should see how amazed they are when things turn out exactly as we've written them up first ... I know you won't want to stand in the way of our being modern ... and that is why I am sure you will write a poem called 'Snow', and then come to the theatre to read it.' (Pamuk 2002: 29-30).

## CHAPTER 3

# Intermezzo 1958-66: Meeting the Actually-Existing Working Class

*Class was quite crucial to the British Party's sense of corporate identity .... But ... it also served as a form of symbolic reassurance .... What Marxists called 'class consciousness' was in fact another term for political consciousness ... 'A good class attitude', in Communist vernacular, was one that was politically correct .... Communists used class in a metaphorical rather than a literal sense ... Their eyes were fixed ... on laws and tendencies of development .... In a strange inversion of the original Marxian proposition, it was not social being which determined consciousness, but consciousness which gave a direction to social being .... Individuals might desert their class ... but they could not honourably change sides .... They nursed a particular hatred for the jumped-up, a particular scorn for the socially hybrid. Mobility was a kind of pollutant. (Samuel 1987:60-62)*

*I have been thinking for some time of writing a piece called: In Pursuit of the Working Class .... I have chased, off and on ... the working class and the English. The pursuit of the working class is shared by everyone with the faintest tint of social responsibility; some of the most indefatigable pursuers are working-class people. This is because the phrase does not mean, simply, those people who can be found by walking out of one's front door and turning down a side street .... Like love and fame it is a platonic image, a grail, a quintessence, and by definition, unattainable. (Lessing 1957)*

## Back to Blighty

It was not so easy returning to Britain after my years in Czechoslovakia. My friends from Regent Street Poly had scattered. Many of my erstwhile London comrades had abandoned the Party, which was licking its wounds rather than trying to re-invent itself. I went back into my childhood room at home. Alec and Ray did not row about the party that she had left and in which he remained with set teeth. The Party had no job or even a task waiting for me. It also showed no possible interest in my views on Czecho or the IUS. I wasn't even asked to do a report-back. Meanwhile, my eccentric ex-school and ex-Party friend, Raph Samuel, was busy with *New Left Review*, and with creating a *Rive Gauche* coffee bar and meeting place in the West End, eventually called 'The Partisan'. From its unreconstructed interior, however, publicity was being carried out for one of the first Ban the Bomb marches. These were organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Insofar as this had not been dreamed up by the international Communist-front peace movement (represented in the UK by the British Peace Committee) it was not being identified with by the CP, which considered it largely petty-bourgeois, pacifist and, in any case, anti-Soviet<sup>1</sup> Having lost much of my confidence in Communist Parties, even without power, I threw myself energetically into the 1958 Easter March of the CND, this one going from London to the nuclear arms establishment at Aldermaston. I also found a stop-gap job parcelling books at Pan Books in the centre of London. I made desultory efforts to get into film-making. But the only British film school at that time was upstairs in a back street of Brixton,

in deepest South London, and was asking for fees I could not afford. And the only CP-related film activity still going on had been reduced to distribution, run in a Soho basement. I nonetheless attached myself and my somewhat dodgy 16mm movie camera to a team led by the increasingly well-known film director, Lindsay Anderson. I therefore got to see his rushes somewhere in Central London, but failed to catch his attention with my amateur efforts and enthusiasm.

I was hoping the CP would advise me on how I could avoid conscription, but the Party still apparently believed that all us young (male) Communists should learn how to fire a rifle, just in case, despite its belief in a peaceful British Road to Socialism, an armed revolution or counter-revolution should turn up. The people at King Street also clearly thought the army would be good for *me*. So, on the one hand I reported to the army that I was back in the land. And then, when my call-up papers arrived, I told them – quite untruthfully – that my stay in Prague had included classes in Historical Materialism, Dialectical Materialism and the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik) at the Marx-Lenin Evening School in Prague. This only ensured that I would not enter the officer corps, like other grammar school graduates, or the Education Corps, and that I would not go on military manoeuvres when I got to Germany. I was condemned not only to two years of military service but to spend them in the company of the British working class. This had little to do with any Platonism, grails or unattainable quests, on my part, since I had just done my feeble best to avoid the experience. The only working-class people I knew were in the YCL and the CP, obviously a self-elected elite, socially-committed, intelligent, keen on education, books, intellectual discussion and, yes, international solidarity. I discovered in the army that these people were seriously atypical.

## **The Fucking Army (Where and How to Say it)**

Even before I got to Hamelin, which really is ‘in Brunswick, near famous Hanover City’,<sup>2</sup> I went through some six months of basic training in the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC). This was the one with the trucks. The lowest form of human life here was a Driver, which is what I was and would remain. The blokes I were with were working-class lads of 18 to 20, many from places I had hardly heard of, some with accents I could hardly penetrate. Induction included the making of dog-tags, this process requiring we literally confess a religion. Was I supposed to say I was a Jew, though this was not my religion, or to say I was an atheist, thus concealing that I was a Jew? A squat red-haired Glaswegian ahead of me, as broad as he was tall, said he was an atheist (well, actually, ‘etheist’). When I said to the clerk that I had no religion, and he offered me either atheism or agnosticism, I – ignorant of the meaning of the latter – opted for agnosticism. Back in the barracks, the sergeant punching out dog-tags, did a double-take: ‘What’s a fuckin’ antagonist then?’ I tried to explain that Jock over there, who also had no religion, had taken atheism so I thought I would take agnosticism. ‘Where do you come from then?’, ‘London, sergeant’. ‘Right, then, Church of England’. Clang! Thus did I come to understand the profundity of religious belief within the British army – and many other British institutions.

Stuck outside Yeovil in bucolic but distant Devon, we went through months of basic training, which included truck-driving. If, on your final road test you didn’t hit anyone or anything, you got a driving licence. Less mechanically-minded than most of my fellow squaddies, I was definitely not qualified to actually use my licence, so it was lucky that I only actually drove an army truck for maybe one month in my two years. My mates made fun of me because I said ‘fucking hell’ rather than ‘fuckinell’, but

then ticked me off for effing when we stopped at a roadside café (pronounced 'kayf') during training. Language within the barracks was over-salted with the F-word, as in 'Fuck off you fuckin' fucker'. Oh, and the right way to say 'fucking army' was, of course 'fuckinarmy'. But these guys were on an auto-pilot that switched the word off in public places. When I dropped an F in the café, I became aware of the sudden silence just before one of the squaddies nudged me and told me to watch my mouth. My first months were those of discovery of the British working class, or at least of that part of it with whom I was eating, drinking, sleeping, washing, marching, shitting and moaning. Said one squaddy, 'They give you a pair of boots that you shine till you can see your face in the toe-caps but they take away your personality'. I can still remember my army number and salute: '23559089, Waterman, Sir!'

The routine and monotony were excruciating. The lack of mental activity and reading matter amounted in my case to cruel and unusual punishment. Twentyfour-hour guard duty, which amazingly I had to do but twice in two years, was even worse. So was marching actually. I was shocked to discover both that I liked the military music and that I could not even turn left or right in time. Physical education was OK since I was actually running faster than my – surely? – much fitter mates. They were not putting themselves out, for reasons that I began to understand later when I read Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. This was about a young working-class rebel, in reform school, who loves the freedom of running but deliberately and publicly refuses to win a race for his upper-class reform-school governor.

I volunteered for the education office within the barracks in Yeovil and even the camp library but was turned down for both. There was evidently something in my file, even if it did not refer specifically to the Prague Evening School of Imaginary Leninism. This was confirmed later by a clerk, in Germany, when I was pulled off military manoeuvres after someone had mistakenly allowed me to go on the first of a series. I then discovered that I could spend whole days reading in a garage if I walked briskly across the parade ground to get there.

But my initiation into the British working class was still incomplete. We were in Aldershot, much closer to London, on our way to the still British-garrisoned zone of Northern Germany. Prepared to depart in the morning, my mates and I were in the recreation room watching the BBC when a documentary came on about the revival of militarism in Western Germany. After ten minutes an unknown squaddy walked in and, as if the machine belonged to him, switched to another channel. There were shouts of protest from the audience but I was the only one dumb enough to stand up and argue it out, in the dark, with this shadowy figure. Nobody had told me either that he was the corps boxing champion, and a psychopath, nor that he had previously been disciplined for beating up other soldiers without putting his boxing gloves on. According to my admittedly hazy recollection, it was only after the first punch that I called him a stupid bastard. He then hit me again, breaking my jaw. Standing there with a handful of blood, I said, 'look what you've done!'. He said he had seen blood before (possibly as a result of crushing lightbulbs in his mouth, which I later heard was one of his little pastimes).

None of my mates stood up or said anything. They later explained: 'Well, Pete, you should've sat down if you didn't want to fight'. Not one of them accompanied me to what passed for first aid in the camp. That night they were talking amongst themselves about the documentary whilst I, with only a couple of aspirins to dull the agony, was literally tongue-tied. I spent the next several weeks at the dentist's, thus finally overcoming, through routine, my previous fear of dentist's chairs. I lost two or three teeth, had metal bridges glued to both sets of remaining ones, and then had them wired together

so that the jaw would mend. As bad as the pain was the humiliation, my anger with my mates, and having to remain behind whilst they went off together to Minden in Germany.

I had learnt the lesson that whilst the middle class uses verbal aggression, the working class uses its fists when threatened – or, alternatively, sits down. Solidarity is neither definitional to nor spontaneous in the class. And then, when I returned again to Aldershot, I was told that my own personal psycho was still around in the barracks, sleeping as usual in a bath of cold water, and threatening to do me over again. Or maybe the guys were just having some sadistic fun at my expense. And then came the final humiliation: I was put on a charge and accused of calling the guy a stupid bastard. I said, ‘But he was’, and was told off by the officer for using foul language and – implicitly – for attacking this soldier’s fists with my chin ... *twice*. I was spared further punishment but warned not to repeat this major offence against Queen’s Regulations.

## **Hamelin (1959-60): The Not-so-Great Escapes**

Hamelin (Hameln) is a small town in Germany. There was there no sign or symbol to remind us of the Third Reich or the Second World War. Yes, the River Weser, deep and wide, washed it on the Southern side. And moving into the barracks was like shifting from a no-star to a five-star hotel. Here, at least, was an indication of a serious militarist tradition, very different from the British Dad’s Army. In *our* army ‘Boots, Winterised’ were neither waterproof nor warm but simply had thicker soles and a sewn-in tongue. They were immediately dubbed ‘wobbly-wobblies’. I spent about one year in Hamelin, doing everything I could to escape the discipline and break the senseless routine. Our horrible little sergeant was christened ‘Bitter ‘n’ Twisted’ or ‘BNT’ by the blokes. But they were amazingly tolerant of my education, typewriter, camera, books, Jewishness and Communism – treating me with the same respect and disinterest as they might a Jehovah’s Witness. Their own reading was limited to the tabloids, to the sex-and-sadism pulp novels of Hank Jansen and, amazingly, to women’s romantic fiction. I read all of these, too, but in intervals between Tommy Jackson’s *Dialectical Materialism* or *The Prison Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, these being provided by my friend, one-time editor of *Challenge* and fellow ‘revisionist’, Monty Johnstone.

I was driven catatonic by the limited topics of conversation: Cigarettes, Sports and Sex. Myself a non-smoker who sold his one-shilling army packets for one mark on the local grey market, I had this pathetic recurring dream of ‘crashin’ the ash’ with the best of them. When the boys collected money to buy a radio, even my limited reading time was disturbed by the blasting out of non-stop pop. I could find no other remedy than sabotaging the radio – which I had helped purchase – by breaking one of the wires inside its covering so that not even a mechanic would be able to find out what was wrong with it. At one moment I thought my Aldershot nightmare was returning. A previously easygoing Geordie mate was clearly going further round the twist than I was. But he was doing it physically whilst I was doing it mentally. He got drunk, frequently, and entered our dormitory after lights-out, turning our beds over and threatening anyone who remonstrated with him. Again, no one seemed prepared to face up to him even though he was shorter than most of us. When I finally did stand up (I am a slow learner), and he offered to fight, I said tomorrow if he still wanted to when he was sober (and could presumably hit me more accurately). But what actually stopped him was when I found a key to the door, explaining to the NCO who woke us mornings why the door was locked. Conversation about sex was limited to fantasy, since most of these 18-year-olds had little experience to talk about. When I

said I had done it at home with my parents' knowledge, I was given the kind of look one would have thought would be preserved for a pervert. Or maybe it was just plain disbelief. When I asked where they had done it, those who claimed to have done so said: up an alley behind the pub.

I made a few closer friends whilst in the army. One was big Johnny Hing, rather better educated than the others and who was also more adventurous than they. He managed to keep his hair longer than any other soldier, somehow tucking it into a beret shaped more like a submarine than a truck. Johnny told me he was the son of a half-Chinese Hongkong policeman, thus explaining his eyes and his surname. He had completed technical college in Slough and, in Hamelin, was the Commanding Officer's (CO's) driver. He had also done the daily post-run to Hanover, something that not only got him out of the barracks for a half-day but freed him from work for the rest of it. He tried to get me both jobs. But when I stepped on the brakes, I piled the rather big CO into the very small space under the VW dashboard. And I was somehow deprived of the mail-run despite my efficiency in this task. I just seemed to be not so good at skiving as Johnny was. Nor did I ever get myself a German girlfriend as did Johnny. This he managed by declaring love and promising marriage. Johnny also told me he had got his Slough girlfriend pregnant, to which the appalling (to me) response of his father had been: 'you shouldn't shit on your own doorstep'. Two other guys were lefties, one a visiting dispatch rider, Arthur. We made a photo of us giving Communist salutes, to the mild amusement of the soldiers standing around.

The second friend introduced me to the otherwise invisible and always empty barracks library. This still had a remarkable number of left and pro-Soviet books, some from the famous Left Book Club, apparently ordered into army libraries by lefty education officers during the Second World War. That they were still there, after the first peak of the Cold War, and on its front line in Germany, showed how little impact they must have had on British soldiers at this more apolitical time and place.

I did everything I could to get away from the mind-numbing routine. In the tradition of many Great Escapes, these all ultimately failed. The first was free German classes, given by a mild Sudetenlander with a very Czech-sounding name, Polednicek (Poledniček? – referring to the midday church chimes?). Twice-weekly classes in another barracks in town were a welcome break and allowed me to gain a useful knowledge of German (lost when I later learned Dutch). When, however, I applied for a three-month intensive course, my CO told me I would have to sign on for some extra years. I unsuccessfully tried to convince him that, since I would be on army reserve for the following fifteen, this investment would anyway benefit the army. With my few words of German I hitched down to Frankfurt for Christmas, where there lived the sister of a London Jewish friend of Ray and Alec. She and her German Communist husband had returned, after the war, to East Germany. But following 1956 they had traded this in for West Germany. They introduced me to Lothar Böppe, my age, possibly the first Trotskyist with whom I had ever had a civil conversation. He, in turn, took me to a celebration of the German Social-Democratic Party. I was impressed by the extent that this Party was, by 1959, so solidly incorporated into the German social-market economy.

The second means of escape, or at least temporary relief, was conventional, since it meant simply going into town in civvies. I first turned up for army inspection wearing a white shirt and borrowed tie, a sports jacket and carefully pressed trousers. Maybe I looked too much like an army officer on a day off. I wouldn't know. I was laughingly rejected. When I purchased a secondhand suit from another soldier, far too tight for me, I was issued the necessary pass and could later re-sell the suit and wear my own clothes. I went to the town library, which had maybe one hundred books in English. I went to the bars to sell my ciggies, drink a beer and listen to the juke box playing Chris Barber's *Petite Fleur*.

(Chris was the son of the co-head of King Alfred's School, and had tried to teach me cricket. He had begun his later famous jazz band weekends in the school library).

One weekend, when we had been ordered to restrict ourselves to just our corner of Hamelin, I went to the other part, to make photos of the association of ex-SS men, one at least in Nazi uniform, celebrating at their annual drunken gathering. Amongst the celebrants were former SS men from Belgium, with the Flemish flag on their cars. I sent the photos and a letter to my local MP in Willesden. But the matter was never raised by him. No one in the barracks seemed in the least scandalised at the British army being complicit in this exercise in what I suppose should be called Naztalgia. This despite the CO having told me, on the one day I was test-driving his horrible little Volkswagen, that the East and West German generals were plotting together to make war on England again.

In my escape attempts I was prepared for extreme measures – even to the point of taking part, for the first time in my life, in Jewish religious services (previously I had taken part only in celebratory ones and for fun). My evidently Jewish dentist, doing his somewhat more-privileged two years, accompanied by his wife and living in an actual house, asked me whether 'Woburn House' knew I was in Hamelin. 'No, what's Woburn House?', 'Oh, it doesn't matter'. I thought for a couple of seconds: 'Is it some kind of Jewish thing?', 'Yes, you are Jewish aren't you?', 'How did you guess?', 'Because all my Jewish patients are awkward bastards!'. So, somewhat apprehensive at re-crossing the class barrier and leaving the secular world, I went for an equally awkward if tasty meal with Lieutenant Dentist and his wife, Mrs Dentist. Here I was introduced to the rabbi for the British Army Of the Rhine (BAOR). He had the scruffiest uniform and dirtiest belt buckle of any soldier I had so far met. And he insisted on shaking my hand, even in the middle of the parade ground, and also that I should call him Moishe. When he asked me about my background I told him it was atheist and Communist. 'Ah, the YCL'. he said, 'I know lots of them in Manchester'. A Swinging Rabbi, no less!

Moishe invited me for a four-day Passover course, promising good company and 'real Jewish food'. The company was congenial, consisting of working-class British Jews from all over Northern Germany (it only now occurs to me that officers must have had classier Passover courses, possibly with more than ritual wine). One of the lads, from Glasgow, had his own religious kit with him, something I had never seen before in my whole small-j Jewish life. Unfortunately, Moishe went through a transmogrification like the one that turns Transylvanian Christians into vampires. No more Mr Nice Jew! He began to pull rank, even if not to refer to Queen's Regulations on Jewish Observance. I went once to prayers and was shocked out of my assimilated Jewish mind by these guys tying things around their foreheads and upper arms, and then *dovening* (swaying backwards and forwards as they chanted). I had previously not even heard the word! And this was not in a familiar guttural Yiddish either: it was in your actual biblical Hebrew! When I failed to turn up at the next prayer session, Moishe, now Captain Dovening, *ordered* me to do so. 'But, Moishe', I appealed to his previous rational and laid-back incarnation, 'I don't believe in this: it would be hypocritical to pretend that I do'. 'Nevertheless', he insisted, 'You have to try'. To add injury to insult, the Jewish food turned out to be kosher stew, canned in Swansea, a Welsh city not noted for its *haute cuisine*, Jewish or even Welsh. Previously I had been simply a non-religious Jew. Moishe was turning me into an anti-religious one. Getting back to the barracks and eating a chip butty<sup>3</sup> was a considerable relief from kosher stew and seeing religious Jews doing their medieval oriental thing.

Two more escape attempts awaited.

The first was joining the Corps Ski Team – qualified for by having skied for the other side in the

Cold War. Out of the barracks for six weeks! We actually had two weeks, in civvies, in pretty Kitzbühl, in the Austrian Tyrol. The only problem was that the lieutenant in charge was an athlete who wanted us to do *langlauf* (cross-country skiing). Neither I nor the other soldiers who had been signed up was any kind of runner. All the other corps had simply taken their champion distance runners and put them on skis. The officer who had recruited me in Hamelin was a sweetie, whom we would call Johnny if no one else was there, but he could not ski. In the end he seemed to me to deliberately fall, to strain something, and get sent home. We went back to Hanover before going to the North German Harz Mountains for training and competition. There we were housed in a disused factory, with maybe one hundred guys sleeping in one freezing hall, in which iron stoves fought a losing battle whilst simultaneously pouring out their noxious fumes. Our own little British Nazi lieutenant still insisted we do *langlauf* despite all the evidence that we were better qualified for going downhill assisted by our own weight. The only mercy here was that I was actually the fastest of our v-e-r-y slow group. And then, one day, we were all trucked down to the nearest town to the public baths for a hot-water soak.

Who knows whether it was really a congenital thing, as the Army medics suggested, or a result of freezing in the Harz that led to the kidney problem that got me out of Germany and almost, but not quite, out of the fuckinarmy. I had to first pass out on the guardroom floor before they took my complaint seriously. I then went backwards and forwards to a very nice little (formerly Nazi) army hospital and was eventually shipped back to the UK for an operation at the Queen Alexandra Military Hospital on the banks of the Thames in London. One squaddy, skeletal and pallid, died on the ward and was wheeled out one night. I had forced myself to talk with him, and he had been hoping for a recovery. Still in my early 20s, I knew I was going to die, either during or as a result of the operation. Bearing in mind my failure to so far make any mark on the world, and my meagre sexual experience, I was both frightened and depressed. I was not cheered by the doctors, who told me that even if they had to remove the kidney, which they did not, I would be OK as long, ho-ho, as the other was not hit by a bus. When I did not die, and had my first solid meal after the operation, however, I opted for kidney stew. This is actually an unappetising dish, even without the immediate associations, but it tickled my irony bone. One day, miraculously, Jean McCrindle, from Regent Street Poly days, turned up, impressing my room-mates and reawakening my previous crush on her. Unfortunately, however, this was only a token of comradely sympathy. I did get a few weeks sick leave at home but was not discharged, and had to work out the rest of my two years down in Aldershot again. Here we could bugger off to London every Friday as soon as we had finished peeling two days' supply of potatoes for the canteen. Before final discharge, I managed to take part in another Ban the Bomb March, Easter 1961, where I was at last able to take advantage of my army boots – and where I met Ruthie, my future wife. She was very attractive, extrovert, Dutch, Jewish and Communist. What more could I – or Ray and Alec – want? And what more could Ruthie, with no parents, want than one of me and two of them? More on Ruthie below.

## **London (1960-61): Journalism, For a Living and a Life**

Whilst still in the army, I had been looking for work as a journalist and arranged my interviews for Mondays so as to get a three-day weekend. Although the officer concerned complained that the army was not an employment agency, I eventually landed a job on Fleet Street, but as a sub-editor on a

weekly with the accurate but hardly exciting title, *Gas Journal* (this was a decade or so before gas became *the* exciting new fuel). The problem was that *Challenge* didn't need me and wouldn't have accepted me even if it had. And the *Daily Worker* could only offer me some reporter's job in the provinces. This was below what I considered to be both my qualifications and my dignity. I had been turned down by more interesting publications. After all, the only work I could show them had been done in Communist Czechoslovakia, the only reference letter that from *World Student News*. The peak of the Cold War was over but not anti-Communism. A former *Daily Worker* journalist friend of my parents, now editing an architectural publication, had reacted with shock and horror when I had written to him, at his work address, seeking advice and assistance, under the Old Comrade's Act. So it was subbing on *Gas Journal* for maybe six months until I landed a marginally better-paid job on *Do-it-Yourself*, which had the advantage of being more popular, allowing occasional reporting, and in being just off Tottenham Court Road and therefore closer to home.

Store Street, where I was working, was round the corner from the University of London Union. Passing this one day, I happened across a Soviet student delegation. I greeted them in Basic Slavonic and was invited back to their hotel for a chat. Here two more demonstrations of the Cold War occurred: yet another expression of *vranya* from the Russians, and a demonstration that the KGB mentality existed also in the British Foreign Office – or was it the more-cultural British Council? The *vranya* came when I subversively asked the Russians how they had responded to the abundance of consumer goods in the shops. 'Well', came the politically-correct reply, 'we noticed that there were so few people in the shops' (translation: if there were so many goods available in the GUM department store, there would have been a riot). The KGB demonstration came from this upper-class young man in a suit who told me I had no right to be talking to his Russians.

By this time I had got involved with not only the Willesden YCL but also the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and its monthly newspaper, *Youth Against the Bomb*. The editor was John Hoyland, a schoolboy YCLer – as were several leaders of the YCND – from a friendly Communist intellectual and artistic family. I became, effectively, assistant editor – another (groan) unrecognised position. However, both John and the YCND leadership were congenial and committed people. So for maybe a year I was running around London during extended lunch hours, evenings and weekends, writing, laying out, checking proofs at the North London printers, and trying to sell the paper of what was a new, attractive, autonomous and growing movement.

The CPGB, as mentioned above, had been originally hostile to the CND. Finally, it gave way, at a London 'aggregate' on the Peace Question. Here, Party ideologue, Raji Palme Dutt, performed one of his customary ideological miracles, explaining why the Party was abandoning its unconditional identification with the British Peace Committee for a qualified recognition of the CND. The CP had, of course, been correct before and it was correct again now. I got up from the floor, steam curling from my head, but otherwise keeping my cool: 'Would this meeting not wish to congratulate those YCLers in the leadership of the YCND, for having foreseen the significance of this new peace movement before the Party leadership did?' Johnny Gollan, then leader of the CP, turned to his fellows on the platform and said, aggrieved, 'No one told *me* that we had YCLers in the leadership of the YCND!'

Ruthie, who I had met on the 1960 Aldermaston March, was born, 1933, to a religious Jewish father who had a well-known camera shop in The Hague. Many years later, when we began to live in this city, she pointed out to me the apartment in which the family had lived at the beginning of the war. She recalled roller-skating in the little triangular square below and her mother throwing down her

sweater with the Nazi-required Star of David stitched onto it. As things got worse, she was separated from her parents, since she was more likely to survive as a little Dutch girl called Loekie than with her foreign-born parents. After numerous traumatic experiences she landed up with a couple of retired teachers, parents of resistance activist friends of her sister Annie. At the end of the war Ruthie had to come to terms with the deaths of her deported parents and other siblings. Her much older sister and mother-figure, Annie, had returned from Auschwitz to Amsterdam but was rebuilding her own life and could not take on responsibility for Ruthie. Annie came from the Communist part of the family, but Ruthie was obliged to grow up with her 'Zionist' (actually, simply conventional) brother's family in The Hague. She had a difficult adolescence. As she was finishing secondary school, both halves of her Dutch family decided she would be better off in Israel, where she landed on her feet in a leftwing kibbutz. She lived in Israel around seven years, did some nursing, hated the military training, had many love affairs, got briefly married, and came down with (psychosomatic?) jaundice on the day the 1956 war with Egypt started. She joined the Israeli Communist Party, went to the Warsaw Youth Festival and returned to the Netherlands. Here she joined the Dutch CP, took part in street demonstrations and worked for the records division of Phillips. Eventually she decided to go to the Montessori Teacher Training College, which she loved. She was still studying when we met.

We kept in touch over a year or so by brief visits, by mail and by phone. After a first visit to her in Amsterdam, June 1960, I wrote a letter revealing very mixed feelings about what was a rather new relationship. Whilst it denied that I was in love, it revealed all the uncertainties about my feelings for her and hers for me that surely go along with this condition. It also commented on how simple politics was compared with the age-old matter of creating a lasting relationship. Much of our correspondence, however, did deal with politics: peace movements and anti-imperialist demonstrations, as well as my somewhat contradictory attempts to simultaneously criticise the CP whilst getting the YCL to take me on as editor of *Challenge*. I was enchanted by Ruthie, particularly because she was so spontaneous and seemed to me somehow much more emotionally in tune than I was. I had more trust in her feelings than I had in my own. We planned for her to come to the UK and for us to live together. Previous to this we had only spent a total of about one month or so together. At the same time I was applying for a place at Ruskin College, an adult education place in Oxford with long labour movement connections (Andrews, Kean and Thompson 1999). Just how I was going to manage this, on a local-government single-person grant, was quite unclear. It was made even more doubtful when Ruthie called to tell me, shyly, that we were pregnant (she rather more than me). I was somewhat overwhelmed by becoming, as a 25-year-old teenager, in short order, a husband, a father and a student. The evening after I told Ray and Alec of the pregnancy I found on my bed a little blue-pyjamaed and squeaky baby (eventually worn out by our real-life squeaky one, Danny). This I forwarded to Ruthie for practice. Eventually, Ruthie came over, and we lived in the light, low-ceilinged, upstairs tenant's room, on which I had practised my new do-it-yourself skills. When it was confirmed that I had got the Ruskin place, and that Ray and Alec were prepared to support us financially, things began to fall into place. We had a big non-religious and cross-cultural marriage. Alec suddenly became very family-minded, insisting on inviting relatives whom he otherwise had very little time for or patience with. In addition to the UK, Dutch, French and Israeli family, those present included our South African friend Kader Asmal,<sup>4</sup> my Prague friends, Arni Björnsson from Iceland and Igor and Valentina Biriukov from the Soviet Union, Ruthie's friends Renate Segre, an Italian Jewish Communist historian, Walter Baker, from Jamaica, and various comrades from the local YCL and the peace movement. Around midnight, Izio, the representative of our Israeli family, began to sing the morning prayer in Hebrew, in the hope of encouraging the remaining revellers to leave.

# Oxford: Their University and Mine

I looked for a cheap room for myself in Oxford, offering baby-sitting to the landlady. Ruthie, now about six months pregnant, remained with Ray and Alec in London. Every Monday morning I would get up at around five o'clock, take public transport to the A40, and hitch the 60 miles (now 100 km) to Oxford. With luck this would take 90 minutes, but often it would be more like three hours. Every Friday I would hitch back. Given that I had not studied for many years, given the week full of classes and the weekly essays at Ruskin, given that I had never been married nor fathered a baby before, given the weekly shuttle, this was a stressful period. Fortunately, Ruthie had Danny during the Xmas vacation, January 1962. This was announced in the *Daily Worker*, stating that he 'hopes to meet friends and comrades at Aldermaston' (which he, or anyway we, did). We then spent anxious nights worrying when he cried and even more when he was silent. A few months later I found a cheap apartment, at Kennington, just outside Oxford, with only an hourly bus service, but within a thirty-minutes bike ride. Here we were able to set up house together for the first time. We were to spend five years in Oxford, moving twice, each time, with amazing luck, to better accommodation – meaning with rooms we could sublet. Our last place was a two-storey terraced house, with lots of rooms, a garden, and a number of local friends and friendly working-class neighbours. It was here that Tamara, our second baby, was born in 1963. Ruthie was having back-trouble during the pregnancy, so we advertised for household help. We got Sarah, a young, willowy English rose, living round the corner, married to a student and with a child of her own. She had taken off her CND badge to ensure she was hired. We agreed to employ her providing she put it back on again. Despite our various travels, careers, marriages and other adventures, we managed to meet up and stay in touch and on a dramatically changing left.<sup>5</sup>

Combining 'town and gown', family and study, was not easy, even if Ruthie was a fulltime housewife. I remember Danny in the playpen, with me doing 15 minutes on my essay and five minutes with him. In the early-1960s, it appears, I was considered a model husband, able and willing to feed, bathe, change and take care of the kids in Ruthie's absence. However, when I had to follow Ruthie to Amsterdam once, I popped Danny on top of a pile of paper nappies in my rucksack, and – according to the gasps of horror behind me - nearly brained him leaving the coach at Heathrow. I also landed little Tamara in hospital when her heel got caught in my bicycle spokes. She came back later with Ruthie, and with a massive plaster cast on her tiny leg. When Danny started nursery-school, I once dropped him off my bike on the drive leading to the building. On return I found a notice saying there would be no school that day. Some building workers, who had brought him home, had a certain amount of fun at my expense. When I got home, Danny was there with his hands on his hips to give me a telling-off. How the kids survived this absent-minded fathering is one of life's little miracles.

Things were no easier on the gown side of the equation. When I was at the University, I arrived early for a tutorial with my history tutor, Henry Pelling (1920-97). It had been raining and I had shed my rain suit in his outside room, feeling happy that I had time to disrobe and comb my hair before submitting myself to the one-on-one session I always found so intimidating. He then tore a strip off me for using his outer chamber as a waiting room. I explained the circumstances: that I was married, lived down the Cowley Road, and always allowed extra time for cycling so that I wouldn't be late. He, who gave every impression of being a bachelor Oxford Don, said that my domestic arrangements were my own business and not that of the University. Pelling, a liberal of some kind, happened to be the author of the only then-existing history of the Communist Party. In so far as I was myself presenting

rather different views of labour history to his own, I was left wondering whether it was my rubber boots or my Communism that was bothering the arrogant bugger so much. He eventually, I believe, left Oxford for Cambridge and labour history for psephology – neither of which were of any interest to me. I thought they probably deserved him.

Ruskin College, in the early 1960s was not what it had been or would be. What it had been was a significant part of a broad labour movement, at a time when this was confident, expanding, and had a culture of its own. What it would become-known for, a decade or so later, was hosting the first British conference on women's liberation, and as the home of the 'history from below' movement, as well as its journal, *History Workshop*. The first event involved Sheila Rowbotham, the second was the brain-child of Raph Samuel.<sup>6</sup> But, in the early 1960s when I attended, it was a redbrick, back-street (literally) Oxford college for the working-classes, issuing Oxford University diplomas after two years of study. It provided an intellectual stepping stone to the universities, the middle class and the labour movement bureaucracy. I am not complaining about this, since, despite my middle-class and grammar-school background, I would never have got into the University through any front door.

Yet, despite its solid labour movement origins and genuinely working-class students, Ruskin at this time represented little more than those stepping stones. Behind their doors, tutors hung university gowns. Within their rooms they held university-type one-on-one tutorials. In the lecture rooms they promoted 'value free' social science. This was to me an entirely exotic concept, which initially confused and later infuriated me. The elderly economics lecturer, of evident working-class background, told me I had to first learn the laws of economics and could only afterwards add any particular values I might have. I was confronted with high-pressure liberal-democratic ideology, with which I was largely unfamiliar, and to which I desperately sought Communist alternatives.

Since Communism and liberalism were not only different approaches but often addressed to different problems, such alternatives often did not exist. I sought desperately, in the libraries and on the bookshelves of Oxford comrades, for Marxist work that I could somehow use to answer questions with which CP Marxism was unconcerned or denied the significance of. Before leaving Oxford, I produced a socialist reading list for the Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) course I had followed. Heavily biased toward Communist literature, on the grounds that this was most prolific, it also included work by other Marxists and socialists, such as Paul Sweezy, C.B. Macpherson and W.E.B. Dubois (Waterman 1966). It appeared in a Communist Club bulletin I seem to have edited or at least typed, and accompanied a 'revisionist' piece on Marxism by Communist historian Eric Hobsbawm (1966). This opening up of Communism and Marxism was taking place just a few years before 1968, when challenges to curricula, staff and universities became general in the universities, in Britain and internationally.

The life-saver at Ruskin was when my childhood and school friend, Raphael, was appointed to a lectureship in Social History. For a time he was even a tenant of ours in North Oxford. Students either loved or hated Raph. I had an admiration/anger relationship with him. Apart from his total disregard for 'Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism',<sup>7</sup> Raph would be addressing the rest of the class on the Irish Famine of the mid-nineteenth century whilst giving me a personal *sotto voce* lecture on the Soviet famine of the 1920s. It was some years before Raph would have Ruskin students themselves doing historical research. But he would at least send us off to the Bodleian Library to read original texts rather than commentaries on or compilations of such. One book he wanted me to read was that of Thomas Wright, 'The Journeyman Engineer' (a classical nineteenth century 'labour aristocrat') about the yet-to-be enfranchised working men of his time. This book was called *Our New Masters*, and it

had been intended to reassure the voting middle classes, in 1873, that they need not fear the respectable working man. I *know* I was the first person in 90 years to read this keynote text, in Oxford University's central Bodleian Library, because I had to cut its pages. Raph and I were both similarly delighted and appalled. I guess I would have eventually been one of the Ruskin students who got into the University, even without the stimulus provided by Raph, but he certainly pushed me further in the direction of labour studies.

Once I understood the requirements of Ruskin, the one or two essays per week usually worked out. Here I had the advantage of my grammar school and CP educational background, as well as my journalistic training – meaning of writing to a length and by a deadline. I had the further advantage of the Olivetti portable typewriter I had got secondhand, for £15, with money saved over a two-year period from my army pay. But I was always a terrible examinee. For years after Oxford I had this recurring dream of being in its famed Examination Schools, doing a mathematics exam. This nightmare combined two terrors because I have never been able to count.

The University tradition was of celebrating the end of the exams by eating strawberries and drinking champagne outside the Schools. I had proposed to my Ruskin comrades and colleagues that we should celebrate with proletarian packets of Smith's Crisps and bottles of Guinness. There were no takers. My fellow students at Ruskin were under greater pressures and temptations than I was. Some of our Communist group simply adopted the dominant discourse, at least in their essays. And most Ruskin students were anxious to enter the middle classes of which I was already a reluctant and guilty member.

If what was going on within Ruskin had been taking place in a Communist country it would have been called 'brain-washing'. In the first year we were effectively isolated from both gown and town because we were in this beautiful country mansion, itself on the edge of the Oxford suburb of Headington. And then we were overwhelmed by a schedule of lectures, required readings, tutorials and papers. I have already mentioned the 'tutorial', a one-to-one session between the all-knowing tutor and the ignorant student. I considered this a typically authoritarian educational method. It was only when I was in my second year that Ruskin introduced its first teaching seminars.

Given its large, if not exclusive, union intake, students were more open to international solidarity activities than your typical university recruit, and we sometimes initiated such campaigns. I recall street protests about militarist Western Germany, Franco Spain, Vietnam, and the Cuba Crisis (in which the Cubans had secretly permitted placement of Russian nuclear rockets, and the Americans had loudly threatened to destroy them). We had at Ruskin a small number of students from the ex-colonies, on Trades Union Congress or other scholarships. One from Kenya bought from me the whole set of three books by Jack Woddis, CPGB International Secretary, on the role of labour in the African struggle for independence (Woddis 1960, 1961, 1963). Another, from a right-wing Nigerian union, a bullying former sergeant in the wartime British Army, countered our Communist poster, by another, endorsing the visit to Oxford of an (ex-) Nazi diplomat. Not only did he welcome him as an ally in the struggle against godless, totalitarian Communism but, in a debate we had proposed, he dropped a couple of anti-semitic clangers to clinch his case. More often, however, our arguments were with either died-in-the-wool social democrats, or with Marxists of other tendencies.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst still, I think, at Ruskin, I had made photos of a civil disobedience peace demonstration in London. Since Cuba – whose revolution we had been following with great sympathy and interest – was organising an international photo competition, I submitted mine, forgot about them, and was then contacted by the embassy to say I had won a free trip to Cuba. This eventually took place, July 1963,

just four years after the revolution. Since Ruthie suffered from separation anxiety, this was a big sacrifice for her, but she could not imagine standing in my way. Borrowing a second Leica from a London friend of Ruthie, I took off for Havana, via Prague, the stopover there allowing me to briefly meet up again with Zuzana, now working for the IUS! From Prague we flew via Gander to Cuba. Throughout an endless flight, stewardesses kept waking us with strange jet-lagged meals. Insofar as this was my first experience of the Third World, and a post-revolutionary situation, it requires an international intermezzo to this largely national intermezzo.

## Revolution in Coca-Cola Island

I arrived in Havana with a planeload of left British Labour MPs, the artist Feliks Topolski, with Len (a Jewish medical veteran of the Spanish Civil War), and with the schoolgirl daughter of someone to whom the Cuban Embassy owed something. There was also a Chilean economist, whose wife mysteriously passed out in the moist heat of the airfield (wasn't Chile in tropical Latin America?). We were a classical bunch of 'tourists of the revolution' (Enzensberger 1973b). But that piece was only written years later, and my sole preparation for Cuba was: my bad experience of Czechoslovakia; English-language brochures from the embassy; and various leftwing articles suggesting that this was not your traditional Communist revolution but something unique, popular, warm-blooded and full of promise.<sup>9</sup>

I was, however, still an awkward revolutionary tourist. I certainly accepted and enjoyed the luxury hotel on the *Malecón* (even without the boycott-disabled air-conditioning), the avocado salads, the sites, sounds, smells. I was totally charmed by the Cubans, their music, their revolutionary songs, their revolutionary imagery (some of it reproduced by ballpoint, with misspelled slogans or a back-to-front letter N, on the pillows of our hotel rooms).

And, given that I was only learning Spanish, from French, as I went along – and that I had won the trip by making photos – I had already decided to use this journey to make my name as a photo journalist. I went to the old illustrated weekly, *Bohemia*, to get photos of Fidel, Che, Camilo Cienfuegos and of anything else I thought I might miss. I was given numerous archive photos, as well as tiny cups of coffee from the stall across the street. I made friends with our guides, one of whom was married to a leading member of the old CPC (Communist Party of Cuba). I interviewed others. I sought out the father of Antonio Massip, the guy who I had photographed in Sofia, 1955, and who had become Spanish Editor of *World Student News* just before I left. The father turned out to be a past dean at the University of Havana, who had himself been threatened by former-dictator Batista. As we chatted in his elegant University office, his messenger sat at a table, studying.

The other tourists of this revolution were a mixed lot. The British MPs seemed to be well-meaning and plain-spoken working-class blokes, several from mining constituencies. Insofar as the only MP I had ever met face to face had been a Tory, upper-class and destined for a knighthood, I was quite disorientated by this encounter.

A group of young Americans were loud-mouthed and confrontational. This was the moment of Black Power in the US, and some of the Black guys were interested only in thrusting this in the face of any white lefty (or left whitey). There was a heavy dispute involving Dr Len Crome, our International Brigade veteran (who only died, 2001, aged 92). I thought briefly about telling them who he was, but then thought they would consider the Spanish Civil War some insignificant conflict between white

Europeans.

I got talking with a white working-class American, interested in my Braun camera flash. He was resident in Cuba, had a girlfriend, but was eyeing-up our pretty Hampstead schoolgirl. Len was singularly unimpressed with this ex-biker: 'Those camp-followers and adventurers, there were plenty of them in Spain!'

I also met up with a couple of young pro-Cuban Belgian guys, busy making a film for TV. And, of course, also looking for women. One guy came down to breakfast cursing a woman he had slept with – 'That whore, she gave me the clap!' as if he had had no part in the transaction. Danilo, architect son of a Yugoslav diplomat, was rather more serious, and able to balance off his Cuban against his home experience. When I was telling him that a popular Cuban song translated as 'Peasants, Artisans and Others' (thus reproducing part of the *Internationale*), he for the first time revealed his experience of Latin America and knowledge of Spanish, telling me that *Indios* meant not Others but Indians. Oh.

Somewhere I met two young local artists, sympathetic to the Revolution, who took me back to their modest suburban apartments to show their work. I got particularly friendly with Tomas Marais, who gave me a whole roll of his coloured woodblock prints, on the promise that I would exhibit and try to sell them for him. One poster-sized one still decorates my stairwell. I also left with him my Jesus sandals (of which more below).

When taken to some required tourist site, I wandered off to photograph shoeshine boys or porters. In the backstreets of Havana I was arrested for several hours, as I photographed what turned out to be the city's main power station, now named after Congolese martyr Lumumba. And, being pissed off by the hours lost while phone calls were made, I shot from the chest, whilst the over-vigilant guards argued whether or not I could be making photos.

I also tracked down my first boss at the IUS, Lionel Soto. Lionel, a CPC member, had returned to Cuba in the later 1950s, been arrested, imprisoned and tortured. He was now chief of the *Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Training Schools). He was just as supercilious as when I had first met him in Sofia. By continually pressing our helpful guide, I got invited to dinner to meet her CP-leader husband. It was bad enough that he turned out to be a tight-lipped Communist bureaucrat. Worse was the luxury apartment and that they served me up for one meal as much meat as an ordinary Cuban would get in one month.

I began to feel that the revolution was falling into a familiar pattern. This feeling was only reinforced when we went to meet Fidel. At our hotel, I was sent back upstairs, to put on shoes (sandals were only for homosexuals and Che) and borrowed tie. 'But', I protested in my naïve Western Communist way, 'Fidel doesn't wear ties' (he followed his followers to the tie-department only some years later). We were then taken to be fed and watered, and to wait four hours for Fidel to turn up, in the half-dark. This allowed me to later say that, yes, I had met Fidel but he hadn't met me. If this was frustrating, July 26 was gruelling. The greater part of one boiling day we were walking, standing and finally waiting, with maybe a million people in this enormous plaza, in which, under the magnificent statue of José Martí, Fidel was to make one of his four-hour speeches. I later referred to this as the world's largest lecture theatre. But I would myself never have wanted to be lectured at for four hours even in English. Instead, as in Sofia in 1955, I took photos. I had my new long-focus lens, allowing me to make dramatic photos of the *Líder Maximo* and other historical figures. Finally, bored and exhausted, I abandoned the *Revolución*, to make my own way home.

Having repeatedly refused to make the pilgrimage to Oriente, where the revolution began, I was eventually given my own worn-down Chevrolet and a young guide, and we went to the other end of the

island, Pinar del Rio. One day – and not necessarily to punish me for refusing to take the ritual trip – my guide put me on a pony and we rode three hours out and up into the mountains, to meet people who worshipped water for its medical healing properties. There was here clearly some connection with Catholic ideas of holy water and spiritual healing. The tiny community I visited was three hours off the road and therefore still little changed by the Revolution (or antibiotics). I was, however, being increasingly tortured by the ride, worsened by my guide's repeated teasing of my otherwise docile pony. I was also worried about the cameras jingling together on my chest. I slept in the car on the way back to Havana, got badly sunburned, and then took several days to recover from my first and last horseback experience.

It was only a couple of days before we left Havana that our guides understood that I had been a prizewinner in the famous photo competition. It was too late to take me to the exhibition. But not too late for me to receive a package of Cuban pesos. At this time it was possible to change back into dollars any pesos one had originally bought. With the help of the Belgian cineastes, I was able to obtain maybe \$150 – for me then a princely sum – which I was determined to invest in processing and printing my photos on return to the UK.

Back in Oxford with Ruthie and the children, I put a considerable amount of time and money into making and mounting prints, arranging an exhibition in a friendly college, and trying to place photos and stories in CP and other publications. These were the best set of photos I had ever made. And it gave me special pleasure to mount them on advertising placards I had liberated from the Coca-Cola company. In all I must have published around ten items on my trip, in Britain and elsewhere, in Communist and non-Communist publications (e.g. Waterman 1963, 1964a, 1964b, 1964c, 1964d, 1965a, 1965b). I still love the photos, but have had second thoughts about the texts. The tone of these is captured by this extract from an article in the Oxford student magazine (Waterman 1963):

*The post-Stalin revolution ....* In four weeks I met only four people who opposed [Fidel]. The solidity of this Revolution is due to its development from a national one. But could it have been kept so solid in the pre-1956 era? That Cuban socialism has learnt from the past was shown in the 1962 exposure and isolation of the Stalin-like leader Anibal Escalante. No doubt the socialist conviction of the Cubans can be found also amongst the Russians (a Yugoslav told me it was the same in his country). The point is that in *this* era it will not be necessary for Cuba to go through the terrible period that the socialist bloc is only now recovering from. Cuba is already a far more attractive Communist country than others for non-Communists and anti-Communists. The eight Labour MPs, who were in Cuba at the same time I was, were all keenly and sympathetically excited by a kind of Communist regime they had not seen before.

The exhibition went well, with some sales of Tomas's prints. And we also put on a lecture by Robin Blackburn, the New Left's specialist on Cuba. The next time I was to meet him would be in Prague, the day after the Soviet invasion, 1968. The old era of Communism was not yet over, and Cuba did not escape the terrible period. My stories and diary extracts endorsed the enthusiastic reports on the Cuban experience. My more problematic experiences and critical thoughts were reserved for my family, friends and comrades. After my experience in the Communist world, and my fading enthusiasm for British Communism, I was clearly over-identifying with this Third World revolution. If I compare this with my willingness to stick out my neck over the Májales in Prague, it looks as if I was not yet prepared to take an *individual* position regardless of the immediate or broader community

of Communists or other leftists with whom I was still surrounded.

## **Oxford: Back Street to High Street**

From Ruskin College, in Walton Street, I was amongst the 10-20 percent of students nominated for an Oxford college. This was Queen's, right in the middle of Oxford's High Street. But I failed to get a college fellowship and this meant that I had to find a job to support my family. Eventually, I spent a year driving a Coca-Cola truck around Oxford and the surrounding countryside. I joined the Transport and General Workers Union (familarly, the T&G) and recruited one or two of my fellow drivers. But I was not a very good driver, failing month after month to get my scratch-free bonus. One day I failed to secure an ice-tank I had to deliver to a village fête. It was only when I arrived that I discovered this had fallen off. Driving back to search for it I was stopped by police who told me a motor-cyclist had driven into it and been hospitalised. I returned to the depot, where they had already been informed. They told to take the rest of the day off. I was on no account to visit the guy I might have killed, or even phone the hospital to ask after him. Eventually I received a hefty fine, paid by the T&G. I had a rotten feeling about this, too. But during this same period someone suggested that our two or three years of residence and tax-payment in the city qualified me to apply for a further education grant from the local authority. I entered the University itself in 1964, having to do two years to complete the requirements for an Oxford Bachelor's Degree, which normal entrants did in three.

I never got to truly love Oxford University as an institution, any more than I had Ruskin. One of my first experiences was being invited to dine with the 'Dons' in a stonewalled chamber probably called the 'Senior Common Room', 'High Table', or something equally Victorian ... or medieval. In addition to wearing a suit and tie, I was confronted with a confusing array of cutlery and wine glasses. There were servants dressed in archaic costume. The food was predictably English and dull. I was in no way either enchanted or incorporated – as distinguished from intoxicated – by such tastes of privilege. It was around this time that the neutron bomb was being discussed, a quintessentially capitalist device since it only killed people whilst preserving property. I thought Oxford University made the only good case for the weapon. I had no problem with the buildings and gardens. Indeed, I still retail the joke about an American visitor who asks a college porter how it was possible to get the turf in the quadrangle so green, flat and soft. The porter replies, 'Well, first you turn the sod, then you sow the seed, then you roll it and cut it, and just carry on doing so for 300 years'. Apart from my attachment to the architecture and the libraries, I began to develop a feeling for intellectual activity as a way of life. I guess I had begun to realise that one could be a Communist *and* an academic. My exam results did not allow me to continue on to a higher degree. However, the training did later encourage me to do my first piece of empirical research whilst I was working for the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), in Prague. And this eventually led to my fourth career – after journalism, truck-driving and union education – in those ivory towers I had previously railed against.

I also loved the city, its main streets, alleys and even its rundown working-class back-streets. But this was at least in part because we spent most of our time in Oxford half-way up the road to Cowley, where there was one of Britain's largest motor-plants. And, I guess, because down on the Cowley Road itself almost all our domestic needs could be met: there was a kindergarden, doctor's surgeries, a telephone box, a Tesco supermarket, even a cinema. At the top of the hill there was one of Oxford's leafy parks. Once a week we could go into town, with the kids, to the Open Market. Here, mothers of

crying children would be met with the cheerful greeting of cockney traders from London: 'Poor little bugger. Giv'im some rusty razorblades to play wiv, luv'.

Within Ruskin we had formed a group within the University CP Branch, in which a couple of ex-Ruskin students, Mike Steadman and Brian Bicat, were active. Brian, fortunately, was married with kids, and lived not too far from us, up the Cowley Road. Since his wife, Inger, was Danish, this made a nice friendship for our similarly mixed family. Another member was Chris Allen, with whom I was furious for dropping his Party work in his final year, whilst admiring him for getting his priorities right. The CP had not been impressed by my going to Ruskin, dismissing this as a school for labour bureaucrats (which it was), but thereby assuming that I was betraying the working class by going there. Two years later, one of my CP detractors himself entered the college. Amongst the first-year students at Ruskin, in any case, I discovered five or six other such traitors to the CP. Despite the pressures of studies and family, I was active within Ruskin, and we put on visiting lectures and Marxism classes.

Once at the University I took part in such CP and other left club activities as were possible. This was not a big period of student radicalism, even less of CP growth. Rather was it a period of student dissidence within the CP, with our branch pressing for a Congress resolution against the repression of Jews in Eastern Europe. We were also, I seem to recall, all opposed to the change of name of the *Daily Worker*, which at least had some bite, to the *Morning Star*, which had none. This was a sleazy operation by the Party leadership, which somehow thought that a change of name but not of content would increase readership. Amongst the tricks here played was getting the loyal members to vote for a change of name and only afterwards announcing what it was going to be. Within Oxford, local CP sleaze and election candidate, John Tarver, pushed this through. And remained unimpressed by the later complaints of the faithful that they had been tricked. So I think our Branch was already unloved by King Street even before they found out that we had been penetrated by a group of Trotskyists from the Socialist Labour League. This was another bit of dirty work, from the Trotsky School of Falsification, since one of these secret 'entrists', Mike Woodhouse, was one of our tenants, and his girlfriend, Jenny, was a frequent visitor. I was branch secretary when we received a letter warning us of this situation from, I think, the new District Secretary, Gerry Pocock<sup>10</sup>, an old London YCL friend. Issofar as I was liable to think the worst of King Street, and because these three or four were, of course, amongst our most active members, I protested against the vile Stalinist accusations. We had to meet up with Betty Reid, King Street's Hammer of the Trots, who laid out the evidence. The CP clearly had its own agents within the SLL to keep track of these Trotskyist ones. When we in our turn were obliged to confront our Trots, they cheerfully admitted their secret mission, justifying it by reference to the interests of the proletariat and the revolution. I accused Mike of having abused our friendship and making me lie in their defence to the Party. We also told him to clear out of the house. He had at least the grace to leave behind, by way of compensation, a massive ship's radio with glowing valves and excellent reception.

More lasting friendships were made with Bertell Ollman and his beautiful and militant French wife, Paule. Ruthie and Paule first met in a park, wheeling pushchairs. Later, our Danny and their Raoul could be found fishing in the gutter outside our front door when it wasn't even raining. Bertell was doing a PhD on Marx's theory of alienation (Ollman 1971). He was an independent Marxist whilst I was, of course, a dependent one. He argued that it was just as possible for a revolution to break out in Brazil if they lost the World Cup. I considered this to be a new deviation – Football Determinism? – though my own class-determinism hardly seems now to have scored more goals. Bertell did rather

better in the alienation department, his elegant exposition of Marx's dialectic remaining with me till this day. Having accompanied me through various moves over a thirty-year period, the book's cover has become a little tattered, but I still occasionally lend it to others. We later seemed to have crossed paths on our way to the revolution (him) or global social emancipation (me). Fortunately, Bertell also had a considerable sense of fun, producing the game 'Class Struggle' and then, when this business went bust (because the game had no women, indigenous peoples, or other social movements in it?), writing a book about this (Ollman 1983).

I was just approaching my final exams at Oxford when my father, Alec, died, without warning and on the spot, of a massive stroke. Since we had been going through some kind of reconciliation, or simply because as I got older I was better able to appreciate him, this was a sad affair as well as a major shock. I think he was the first person in our whole English family to have died. His funeral was attended by a number of CP leaders, by his fellow stowaway to England, Alf Holland, and by David and his new wife Pat, coming down from Hull. Ray whispered, 'He was too strong for me', but she went on for another thirty years or so, writing her two novels and having her second big love affair. Added to the stress of the funeral was that Alec had left no testament. After to-ing and fro-ing to Oxford by borrowed car or bus, I staggered into my exams, walked out of two of them and was sure I had failed. Oxford, however, does not like failures to stain its escutcheon. Instead it issues a Pass Degree. Despite everything, I still ended up with a respectable, if not brilliant, 2.2. I was disappointed not to have got a qualification which would have permitted me to continue to an advanced course. At the same time my previous disregard for its academic standards sank even lower. I must have been thinking, like Groucho Marx, that I didn't respect any club that accepted people like me as members.

During my five years in Oxford, I had tried to exercise and publicise my journalistic and photographic skills. I still have this collection of draft and published articles, including those on Cuba. And, apart from my demonstration and Cuban photos, I once had a genuine photo-journalistic coup. This was by following by bike, from distant Kennington, a plume of smoke arising from one of the Cowley plants, phoning the *Observer*, and then putting the cassette in an envelope on the train to London. Next day it was on the front page and I got a nice little bit of cash for it.

When, however, I had to think about a fulltime job, I went mostly for teaching opportunities. I think what finally decided us on the WFTU in Prague was that the only other alternative, after maybe six months of applications, was in the Workers Education Association (WEA) in Birmingham. When we later actually spent a year in Birmingham, after Prague, we enjoyed it. But I had seen it whilst on interview, and all Ruthie knew about it was that it was a dirty industrial city in something called, as I may have mentioned, the Black Country. After the dreaming spires of Oxford, those of Prague sounded more attractive. The pay and conditions, which included an apartment, were better too. And I considered the job, with its possibilities for further contact with the revolutionary Third World, clearly more interesting and challenging than teaching union history and industrial relations in provincial Birmingham.

I did consider another sub-title for this chapter: 'Demonstrating Internationalism'. Perhaps it was my waning enthusiasm for the British CP, perhaps that this was not a peak of working-class struggle within the UK, but I seem to have put much of my political effort at this time into international solidarity activities. Curiously, the most national of my political activities seems to have been with the peace movement. The CND might have been implicitly internationalist, and its symbol and slogan did spread internationally, but its main political concern was the unilateral abandonment of nuclear weapons in Britain. And, despite borrowings from Gandhi and the US Civil Rights traditions, the CND

was, in its origins and strategies, a Very British Movement. It was only a decade or so later that the British peace movement got together with the East European human rights movement, thus prefiguring the cross-movement internationalisms that were to become general at the end of the century (see Featherstone 2012:Ch. 6).

By getting myself a Ruskin diploma and an Oxford degree I had – unlike my Ruskin colleagues – hardly changed my class, even if I had hypothetically moved from one segment or layer of the middle-class to another. So the CP charges of abandoning the working class have to be understood as a suspicion that I was on my way up from, or out of, the Party. Oxford had certainly opened my eyes to a world and worldviews both wider and other than those of the Party. It also required me to consider other sources for, or kinds of, Marxist and left thought. But I had no idea of abandoning it. I guess I just began treating Communism as something to which I was condemned. By excluding the notion of leaving the Party, despite my increasing dissatisfaction with it, I was treating my association with it stoically, as fate. I could not see any other party or community I could feel more at home in. And I still needed some such community.

In returning to Britain I had not so much pursued the working class as found myself amongst them, in the army, as a truck-driver, amongst those ambitious and intelligent workers who went to Ruskin, and those friendly folks in our Oxford neighbourhood. Evidently these were not the revolutionary subject of my imagination and desire. But, in pursuit of this platonic image, this unattainable essence, I was to be looking for it in the Third World, not only in or from Prague (1966-69), but, as an academic, for many years after.

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<sup>1</sup> The attitude of the CPGB toward the CND became a matter of controversy more than a half-century later, a controversy to which I contributed on the basis of this chapter. Thanks to Tom Sibley for marginal corrections to my account. See <http://londonsocialisthistorians.blogspot.com/search?q=waterman>

<sup>2</sup> Hameln is famous in Germany as the *Rattenfängerstadt*, and in England because of a poem by Robert Browning. In English the poem is not entitled ‘Ratcatcher Town’ but, more poetically, ‘The Pied Piper of Hamelin’. I am going to call it by its English rather than its German name because this is what we called it in the barracks.

<sup>3</sup> This delicacy, for those unfamiliar with British working-class cuisine, was (is?) a margarine and bread sandwich with the official soggy potato chips inside. Possibly with added Heinz or HP sauce. A warning for readers over the recommended weight for their age-group, or with a high cholesterol count: do not try this at home.

<sup>4</sup> Kader, who had lost out to me for Ruthie’s favours on the 1960 Aldermaston March, was a South African Communist, later a leading legal light in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, then part of South African regimes of increasingly neo-liberal bent [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kader\\_Asmal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kader_Asmal). He retired from the South African parliament in 2008. Much criticised by the independent South African left for his governmental role, he regained some respect by resigning in protest against anti-democratic legislation. He died in 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Sarah turns up in in a chapter immediately following my own in an edited collection on global activism and the media (Berger 2005). Insofar as hers is an autobiographical piece, and traces her path from an Aldermaston marcher to an internet activist, it makes a nice – if far too brief – complement to this book. After a long illness, Sarah died much too early, in 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Sheila and Raph, who themselves became personal friends, provide an overlap between these two phenomena. See Rowbotham (2000:251-3).

<sup>7</sup> Title of a brilliant later essay by our mutual guru, Edward Thompson (1967). The disregard for industrial capitalism refers to train times, which operated according to principles contradictory to Raph’s lifelong predilections.

<sup>8</sup> One of these was with the brilliant but vituperative ex-union activist, Walter Kendall (1926-2003), who went on to write a book on European trade unionism. I met him, in the 1990s, at a seminar on the history of the International Transportworkers Federation (ITF).

I think his fanatical anti-Communism may have served within the union organisations as licence for his otherwise left-labour ideas and activities. When he wanted to continue our Ruskin arguments at the ITF event, I had to remind him that both I and the world had changed in the intervening 30 years. For more on Walter, see [http://www.globallabour.info/en/2006/10/walter\\_kendall\\_19262003.html](http://www.globallabour.info/en/2006/10/walter_kendall_19262003.html).

<sup>9</sup> Later we were flooded with excellent, exciting, but sometimes over-enthusiastic works by such veterans as C. Wright Mills (1960) or young, independent socialists and Marxists as Scheer and Zeitlin (1964) and Blackburn (1963). Even later than this began a more critical leftist literature – something scarce even today. I am thinking in particular of Enzenberger (1973b), a serious and differentiated critique of the Communist Party of Cuba.

<sup>10</sup> Gerry (London 1932) will occasionally turn up again in the course of this book. From a working-class family, Gerry began work in the printing trade as a proof reader. He then spent almost the rest of his working life, in increasingly prominent positions, in the British and international Communist movement. One of his children, Jane, who I remember playing with my kids in an Oxford park, became a student at my old Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, where she later worked as an editor. It was on her recommendation that I turned to Gerry as proof-reader of this text. At time of writing Gerry was actually working on his own autobio. I look forward to reading this as it progresses.

## Chapter 4

# Prague, 1966-69: Workers of the World, Forgive Me!<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction: Optimism and Pessimism

Why on earth did I return to Prague in 1966 for a second dose of state-socialism and Communist internationalism? A member of *the* international revolutionary party in Britain, I was clearly as convinced about the notion of historical *evolution* as any member of the kind of reformist socialist party that then predominated in Western Europe. Our idea of this forward march of history requiring some kind of insurrectionary breach was fuelled by the creation of Communist regimes after the Second World War, the Chinese Revolution in 1949, the on-going struggles for the overthrow of colonial and neo-colonial regimes in Vietnam, Algeria and Latin America. But if I was an insurrectionary for the South, and a non-insurrectionary revolutionary for the West, I was a reformist for the Communist world. I was convinced that – despite the repression of uprisings in Eastern Europe and the bloody Sino-Soviet conflict – things would evolve in a democratic direction. I recognised that this would not happen without social protest of the kind we had seen in East Berlin, in Poland and Hungary. But – Hungary notwithstanding – I certainly thought that this would be a Socialist Evolution. In the East European distinction between the pessimist and the optimist, I was the optimist:

**Pessimist:** Things are inevitably going to get worse.

**Optimist:** It is impossible for things to get worse than they already are.

The day the Russians invaded Prague, Ruthie and I met Maria on our suburban housing estate. She, whilst welcoming the Prague Spring<sup>2</sup> that had provoked the intervention, had been predicting that the Russians would never let the Czechs get away with it. ‘What did I tell you?’, she cried, her accusatory and tear-marked face as white as if we had just carelessly run over her child. I was humiliated: the Czech Pessimist-in-the-Street had been smarter than we international Marxists-Armed-With-the-Weapon-of-Historical-Materialism. The pessimists, I had to concede, had been the realists. What was true for the system appeared to also be true of the international Communist movement. I do not recall if I had then even heard of Gramsci’s ‘pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will’. But after my second dose of state-controlled and institutionalised internationalism, this was to become my *leitmotiv*.

I note another problem with writing about this period in Prague: that it seems not to have impressed itself as dramatically on my memory as the previous one. This may have been because it was the second time, because I was now older, because I was ensconced within a family. It may also have been because the invasion was so dramatic as to have wiped out – as it clearly overshadowed – much else that took place during this period. Finally and curiously, I have been able to find fewer of the people Ruthie and I shared this period with. This may have been because, whilst I was aged around 30 at this time, many of those others would have been in their fifties or sixties and therefore more likely to have

died in the forty or so years that have followed. Or maybe they have not left the printed memories of that earlier generation of Prague internationalists. Whatever the reason, it has required me to search harder, in a more-limited personal archive.

## **The WFTU: Not so Much a Spectre Haunting as a Shadow Cast**

There are several ways I could here present the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). One would be to simply say that it was, with respect to workers what the IUS was with respect to students (Chapter 2). A second would be to recognise the specificity of the working class and trade unionism and therefore the specificity of any union internationalism. This would be a matter of recognising the centrality of the labour movement in left emancipatory thought and action, of the existence – even in distant Latin America and Asia – of long-standing unions and internationals. It would mean recalling the particular problem which the WFTU had in competing with the oldest union internationals – the International Trade Secretariats for different crafts and industries – dating back to the 1890s. Whilst the WFTU preferred to treat the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and ITSs as if they were children of the Cold War (in 1949), this rival international bloc actually continued a tradition going back to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and even the start of the First World War in 1914 (MacShane 1992). A third way of looking at the WFTU would, obviously, be as I experienced it. Rejecting the first option as true but insufficient, this chapter will deal with it in the two other ways.<sup>3</sup>

The Founding of the WFTU in Paris, 1945, was due to a wave of popular internationalism, of worker and union self-confidence following the defeat of Fascism in the Second World War (1939-45/6). It was equally due to the interests of the allied states (the UK, the USSR, the USA, and others) involved in that victory. Whilst the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU, or, in Russian (transliterated), VTsSPS) was self-admittedly a ‘transmission belt’ for the Soviet state, there had, in Britain and the US, been increasingly intense wartime collaboration between the unions, industry and the state. There was a definite assumption, in the international labour movement, that the unions would play a role not only in economic reconstruction but also in the establishment of liberal or social democracies in the liberated countries. There was a similarly widespread assumption that such national corporatism (the functional cooperation of labour, capital and state in economic and political modernisation) would be reflected in the new United Nations (1946). Even at the foundation of the WFTU, however, there could be seen traditional union divisions (Communist v. Social Democratic, Left v. Right, Political v. Economic, nationalist v. internationalist, imperial v. colonial). These were not yet reducible to a binary division. But there were also present elements of the overlapping divide between the Capitalist and Communist worlds that led to the Manichean Cold War split in international unionism just four years later.

The founding congress of the WFTU took place in Paris, October 1945. It was much inspired by both union and state notions of a new world order, organised in the spirit of both the Comintern-sponsored Popular Fronts and the US New Deal of the later-1930s. Unions of the ‘colonial and semi-colonial’ countries were for the first time heavily represented at an international union conference. The Congress claimed to represent 90 percent of the world’s unionists. It declared itself against every form of Fascism, against war and its causes, for the right of self-determination, against colonialism, discrimination and racism. It favoured the extension of union rights, the improvement of working and living conditions, the limitation and liquidation of monopolies. The word ‘socialism’ – which would

have immediately split the organisation two or three ways – was diplomatically avoided. Sixty or seventy years later, despite the reincarnation of the Communist WFTU, the word is still prominently absent (Waterman 2011d).

But by 1949, the international trade union movement was definitively split on the lines of Communist and Social Reformist ideology and the Cold War blocs:

There had been an irresistible wave of grassroots enthusiasm for a grand trade union alliance .... But [t]he concrete achievements of the Federation were too limited to enthuse the millions of members. Relating exclusively to the labor movement at the level of national centres and above, it had no immediate relevance for the rank and file. Debates and arguments within the WFTU were the concern of a tiny elite of national leaders and officials. In such circumstances, the demise of the organisation would pass almost unnoticed [...]. The essential weakness of the WFTU was that it failed ... to develop a genuine trade union role. (Carew 2000:183)

This epitaph is true enough, even if the WFTU continues it today, decades after the collapse of the state socialism to which it subordinated itself (see, for the banalities of one of its leaders before its 2000 Congress, Guardian 2000). The epitaph, however, is not only applicable to the *Communist-dominated* union internationals of the later twentieth century. The social-reformist internationals have also had increasing difficulty in uniting their members and impacting on their rank-and-file globally.

But another reference is essential here, this being to the Comintern's own union international, the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU, Profintern, 1920-37). This front organisation had been turned both on and off at the arbitrary will of Moscow. During its short life the RILU went through strategic somersaults at the same behest. But it was both publicly socialist and revolutionary, it reached into the heart of the unions, and down to the shopfloor. It was led, both nationally and internationally, by experienced Communist union activists. And, uniquely for any union international I am aware of, it actually once produced a pamphlet on how to organise strikes:

It is incumbent upon the adherents of the RILU to study carefully every industrial conflict, to ascertain all difficulties and to find means of overcoming them .... It is only the strength of a thorough study of the positive and negative experiences in the past industrial struggles that real progress can be made in regard to making our own ranks more fit and preparing the whole working class for the coming class struggles between Capital and Labour. (National Minority Movement 1932(?):7).

This document is, of course, marked by distinct features. Produced during the brief 'Class against Class' period of Comintern ultra-leftism, it is largely directed against the 'reformists' and the 'trade union bureaucrats' – with occasional swipes at 'opportunism' and 'legalism'. And, curiously but significantly, it has only a meagre half-page on *internationalism*, here called 'connections with brother organisations of other countries'! It is, finally, not so much an analysis or strategy as a *directive*, this being clear in the tone of the passage above.<sup>4</sup> The point, however, is that the WFTU never, to my knowledge or experience, ever produced anything as simultaneously mundane and crucial as guidance on the organisation of a strike. And it could never have given directives to its national affiliates. Born at a highpoint of 'social partnership' between labour and capital nationally and internationally, it became itself reformist (sometimes militantly), highly-bureaucratised, opportunistic

(in its desperate attempts to influence or recapture the Western unions) and legalistic (with its cherished offices at the UN in New York and the ILO in Geneva). It had, in fact, become a Communist union shadow of an inter-state organisation.

## **The WFTU: Trying to Breathe Life into the Golem**

A golem is, or was (or is supposed to have been), a thing or creature, brought into life from the clay of the River Vltava (aka Moldau), to protect the Jewish community of Prague from its persecutors.<sup>5</sup> The golem, like Frankenstein's Monster, got out of the control of its creator. So it might have been just as well that I was unsuccessful in my feeble efforts to influence the WFTU, even in the specific area of my competence. After a brief indication of life following the Soviet invasion (see below), the WFTU turned back into a lump of clay on the banks of the Vltava. My efforts had no visible impact. And the WFTU had therefore no need to turn *me* back into a lump of clay. I left Prague with enough hard currency for a year of study, and with all my papers and notes.<sup>6</sup> But if I had had no impact on the WFTU, my experience within it largely determined the further direction of my life.

From 1966 to 1969, I was a well-paid but lowly functionary within the significantly tiny Solidarity and Education Department of the WFTU. I had my background in the British and international Communist movement, my qualifications from Ruskin College and Oxford University, I had specialised on labour history, worked in journalism, spoke French, and had been recommended by the London representative of the WFTU, Tom McWhinnie.<sup>7</sup> At this time, the British Communist Party was, however, concentrating its attentions on the national trade union movement and simultaneously reducing itself from global ambition to militant particularism.<sup>8</sup> The Party said neither yea nor nay to my appointment (although I suppose it *might* have privately cautioned the WFTU about my big mouth). My job was labour education in Anglophone countries of the Third World, in particular Africa. I was, however, clearly considered not entirely politically reliable, so had to submit myself to a two-month trial period before I was accepted and could be joined by my wife Ruthie, and kids, Danny (then around five or six) and Tamara (around three or four).

The WFTU occupied some three floors of a pre-Second World War hotel, standing on one side of a square named after Marie Curie. This was an imposing if anonymous office, bearing, as far as I recall, no indication of what it served or represented. Even, if, however, it had been surmounted by a large coloured flashing neon sign, this would have communicated little to the workers of Czechoslovakia it also claimed to represent. The building was close to the centre of Old Prague, being at the end of Pařížská, which links the Old Town Square with a bridge over the Vltava. Náměstí Curieových was also directly opposite the high and steep bank on which there had once stood the world's largest statue of Stalin (Chapter 2). Hereby hangs another Tale of the Vltava. By the time I returned, Stalin had been de-constructed by tiny night-time explosions that had deposited a rain of cement chips and a layer of dust on the international union organisation over which he, dead or alive, still loomed. My office, fortunately, faced not his empty plinth but Prague Castle, and the ever-changing sky above.

I had expected, on arrival, to find a large, efficient, international Communist bureaucracy. Large and bureaucratic, yes; efficient, no. I asked the African Department for access to their library and documentation on Africa. They offered me the three books written by Jack Woddis (1960, 1961, 1963). Woddis was currently Secretary of the International Department of the British Communist Party, a one-time WFTU employee. He was a self-educated working-class bloke of impressive energy

and productivity. His Africa trilogy therefore represented a remarkable achievement. The books were both readable and inspiring. But, given that Jack was an orthodox Communist, they had also been written in the heroic and optimistic mode, during the equally heroic and optimistic period of African independence struggles. They were hardly adequate for guidance to post-independence African unionism and a period of increasing complexity and difficulty. In any case, I had read them whilst still at Ruskin.

Given the lack of resources in the African Department, I asked my Department Head, a veteran Czech union and party *apparatchik*, Chleboun, whether I could purchase a dozen books from the West. Yes. Could I also order a complete set of the country labour profiles produced by the US State Department on Africa, Asia and Latin America? Of course not! Well, could we request them free, in exchange for the union educational materials we had done in French for West Africa? Absolutely and obviously not! But, I pleaded, our materials are anyway published and spread all over Francophone West Africa. If the CIA wanted them they could find them. But in no way was Chleboun going to be – or be held – responsible for any kind of relationship with the US State. Chleboun was, however, a secular Czech, rather than a religious Russian, and finally agreed that I could request these imperialist materials *indirectly* via my mother's address in the UK. So for the following couple of years, the basic WFTU information on Africa was provided free of charge, by the labour affairs section of the US State Department.

Here another distinction must be made between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn's book, *The First Circle*, is about a top-class gulag for scientist victims of Stalin's paranoia. They are set to work on some kind of telephone voice-scrambler. Their initial information comes from American popular science magazines. Every night, these magazines are taken away from the imprisoned scientists and locked in a safe, presumably to prevent their loss to imperialist agents. Not so my State Department materials at the WFTU. I was left in charge of them, day or night, and they were made available for consultation by any of my colleagues who wanted some information, admittedly US flavoured, about African labour law, conditions, industrial relations and trade unionism.

During my two to three years at the WFTU I prepared one or two sets of English-language teaching texts, ran or contributed to three or four residential courses, died the death at four or five WFTU conferences. I felt grossly under-employed. But since my contract was confirmed after the trial period, and I was never called to account for my actual work, I think I must have been considered professional, productive and efficient. Actually, there was no standard or procedure within the WFTU by which such could be measured. I was excluded from all policy discussion, with the partial exception of my own department. The documents relating to WFTU solidarity funds were concealed from me. I was prepared, during the confusion following August 21, 1968, to resort to burglary, or at least borrowing, but these documents *were* locked in a safe – against the depredations of unreliable Communists, if not imperialist spies. As for the *educational work* of the WFTU and its East European affiliates, this now appears to me – certain obviously-ideological elements aside – not so different from that of the ICFTU and its Western affiliates.

In the IUS, we had known each other, we had used first names, many of us lived, partied and criticised state socialism together. The WFTU was simply a big, well-funded, creaking, faceless and soulless bureaucracy, the bosses of which did not even know our names and barely greeted us. Louis Saillant, founding General Secretary, actually resided in France and visited just occasionally, arriving in his black Mercedes and then disappearing into the Secretariat offices.<sup>9</sup> One fulltime French

representative at WFTU was a boastful, loud-mouthed, empty-headed, one-time resistance fighter, who had been dumped in Prague to prevent him doing further damage to our French affiliate, the CGT. In his attitude to Francophone Africa he was also a French chauvinist, if not an open racist. My own department boss, Chleboun, spoke no French, although this was the official language of the organisation.

The main activity of the WFTU, throughout my time there, was the organising of conferences, which would end with a ringing, if predictable, declaration, and the decision to hold a follow-up conference. Amongst its educational materials I found texts on imperialism, on the history of the international trade union movement, on union organisation, on labour rights, the International Labour Organisation and collective bargaining. I translated some of these from French and added texts on African trade unionism and on labour education itself. These were based on books I had brought with me or could – with great difficulty and delay – purchase. One essential one was on African trade unionism, by Ioan Davies (1966), part of the remarkable radical series on Africa published at that time by Penguin Books in London.

WFTU's East German affiliate was more active, having a special interest in Africa and its 'non-capitalist path of development'. At the international school of the FDGB (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*), Bernau, outside Berlin, a couple of earnest scholars were being sent out to do missionary work in Tanzania and other friendly countries. As customary with missionaries, they were also doing research – at least within the prescribed parameters.<sup>10</sup> Political delegations were also sent out from the GDR, and one could trace their route by a chain of African union declarations on 'the peaceful solution of the German question'. I heard about this from my Czech colleague, Jarda, since a certain African union had begged him to undo the damage caused. Travelling to Berlin by train late-1968, I asked Jarda why there were so many more international solidarity banners to be seen there than in Czechoslovakia. 'Bigger banner-producing industry' came his laconic reply.

The publications of the WFTU, one of which, for my sins of omission and commission, I received for 30 years after – and with the traditional irregularity – were always late, always dull, always full of conference decisions, organisational declarations and ritualistic formulae. The only articles I recall that seemed to relate to real-life unions or actual workers, came from a correspondent in the USA.

Then came the Prague Spring of 1968, preceded by some months of rumours and publicised changes within the leadership of the Czech Party and State. Czechs in our building actually turned themselves back from zombies into human beings – and activists. They organised. They became involved in wider movements or committees within society. Our coffin-faced chief accountant appeared, happily reminiscing about pre-war Communism, on television. Within the WFTU, the Western Communists either sympathised or identified with the reform movement, seeing a Communist regime once again re-establishing a dialogue with its citizens. Others (particularly from what was now beginning to be called the Third World) opposed, on the grounds that the movement was inevitably playing into the hands of the West and Imperialism.

On August 21st the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact army invaded Prague. They had evidently failed to first discuss this with 'the class tendency within the international trade union movement'. Circumventing the areas of shooting and demonstrations, avoiding the roads blocked by Soviet tanks, I was the first staff member to enter the office that midday. Half an hour later I was joined by my Czech department chief, Chleboun, grey of hue. An immediate protest was made by those members of the WFTU Secretariat present. On August 28, the first full meeting of the Secretariat took place, declaring (World Federation of Trade Unions 1969:367) that

In fully approving this letter [of August 24], expresses its disapproval of the military intervention which contrasts with the fundamental principles that form the basis of the life of the WFTU and which are freely established by all the national centres affiliated to the WFTU.

It continued:

The Secretariat expresses its full solidarity with the workers and people of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and pays homage to their calm and composure.

I never got to the bottom of this resurrection of socialist and democratic tradition, which I found rather more amazing than that of Jesus Christ after *his* crucifixion. The vote was certainly due to the hope for a revived Communist world and movement raised by the Prague Spring. It must have been influenced by memories and experiences of Nazi or imperial invasion and domination. In part it had to do with a particular composition of the Secretariat (the two East Europeans were from Romania and Czechoslovakia). Then there was the circumstance of isolation from parties/unions at home, and the necessity of taking a personal decision. It seems to be quite difficult for institutions to remove all traces of the movements they once represented, or even of the human beings that fill the functions within them. On the other hand, however, the Secretariat could not resist adding a routine gesture to the effect that

In the interest of trade union unity and proletarian internationalism at the same time it alerts the workers of the world against the present plans and machination[s] especially of those who until now have taken good care not to condemn the American imperialist aggression against the freedom and independence of the Vietnamese people.

But by September 17, *Pravda* was able to report that leaders of the trade unions of the six socialist countries, plus the French Assistant General Secretary and the Italian Chairman of the WFTU had

declared their resolution to contribute to the development and consolidation of fraternal relations and cooperation between the trade unions of the world on the basis of the principles of proletarian internationalism.

The reference by *Pravda* to the principles of proletarian internationalism was, of course, the kiss of death for any such thing.<sup>11</sup>

In December 1968 a Council Meeting of the WFTU was held. This was in East Berlin, the concrete Communist dystopia. Somewhere, in a closed meeting room, there was sealed the Communist equivalent of a gentlemen's agreement – a comrades' agreement? This was, if I correctly recall, between the Italian delegation on the one hand and the Soviet one on the other. The Italians either had tabled, or had wanted to table, a resolution endorsing the Secretariat's condemnation of the Soviet invasion. The Russians had said: if you do not table your resolution, we will not demand a *reversal* of the Secretariat's position. The Italians were relieved that they did not have to confront the Russians in public and could at the same time save their somewhat invisible faces. A Japanese Maoist union delegation was not consulted over this shabby deal. Their representative made a lengthy and forceful condemnation of the invasion. As we switched through the languages on our instantaneous translation gear, and gestured feebly towards the cabins, it dawned on even the more witless amongst us that the

East Germans had simply pulled the plug on it. This was one of the many dubious contributions of that regime to international proletarian solidarity and democracy. During this same trip to Berlin I was told a sad little joke:

**Teacher:** Well, children, I want you each to tell me what you have done in this past month to help the construction of Communism.

**Willi and Ilse (interrupting each other):** Well we helped an old Czech lady to cross Unter den Linden. And the rest of the class helped us.

**Teacher:** Well that was nice. But why did it take so many of you? And what does this have to do with the development of socialism?

**Willi and Ilse (simultaneously):** Well, you see, Miss, she didn't want to go.<sup>12</sup>

## **Disillusioned Tourist of the Exhausted Revolution**

Before dealing with my own experience of the Prague Spring and Soviet Winter, I have to deal here with a Soviet summer that preceded it in more than chronological terms. My third visit to the Soviet Union was far less educative or interesting than my previous ones, made whilst I was at the IUS. In the first place this was because I was one member of an official WFTU delegation. In the second place it was because this was for a highly formalised and organised trip marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Since none of my 1957 friends were in town, I was deprived of personal contacts. Boredom was a major feature of this trip. Another was confirmation of the backwardness of the Soviet Union. Thus, when Scandinavian building-worker unionists publicly raised the question of industrial accidents in the Soviet Union, they were given a short and hostile putdown by the representatives of Soviet building workers, who were, we heard, making their vital contribution to the construction of socialism, as well as of peaceful coexistence and national liberation. Even more depressing was the memorial to the Battle of Stalingrad, held in a city called, curiously, Volgograd. Such attempts to rewrite an uncomfortable history by changing symbols left me more than cold. I had grown up with the memory, or myth, of the Battle of Stalingrad and I was damned if I was going to call this the Battle of Volgograd. Worse was yet to come: the memorial combined gargantuan socialist realism with Soviet sitting-room kitsch (itself dependent on memories of pre-revolutionary bourgeois style).

In desperation at the lack of human contact, I turned to our young interpreter. He was my age and we began by exchanging army experiences. He, as an educated young man, had been an officer. I had, of course, been in the rank and file. But, hey, an army is an army, and compulsory military service is an imposition wherever it takes place. I don't recall him telling me of the brutalisation of Russian conscripts that we have become increasingly aware of since. Maybe officers were spared this treatment and left its application to the corporals and sergeants. But if he might be suspected of discretion on such matters, he was unconstrained when telling me of the horrors visited on his Ukrainian peasant family by, first, the invading Nazis and then the liberating Soviets.

Arriving back in Prague, I was summoned to his office by my boss, Chleboun, who asked me what I had been discussing with our interpreter. I told him. He then asked me what my impression of the Soviet Union was. I said: 'A developing country of the Third World, though probably with more uniforms in the streets'. Chleboun hid a smile behind his hand and dismissed me. I was appalled at being so denounced by one of our delegation members. Which one could it have been? I had and have

my suspicions but I obviously have no evidence. The bad taste remains in my mouth to this day. I don't like to think about it. I only hope that our interpreter had not had a less tolerant boss than I. I cannot repress this memory because one year later this huge backward country, with its brute-force notion of politics, with its Second World War tanks and peasant conscripts, imposed itself on the tiny peaceful country of Czechoslovakia.

## **Lagos, 1968: The Beginning of the Rest of My Life**

Around March 1968, at the beginning of the Prague Spring, I was sent to Nigeria, to run a major national trade union course for the Communist trade union centre there, the Nigerian Trade Union Congress. This allowed me to cash in on all the reading I had been doing, the texts I had been translating from French or preparing myself. This was what I had been employed for and the reason I had taken the job in the first place.

The NTUC had submitted a financial estimate for the event. My boss, unaccustomed to receiving such things, was impressed. I checked the estimate and identified grossly inflated items. Chleboun recognised the findings but was uneasy about my suggestion that I politely question these with the NTUC. I argued they would respect the WFTU more if we took finances seriously. I received £1,500 in cash – a sum I had never before had in my hands. I insisted I would change this in Zurich airport, into traveller's cheques.<sup>13</sup> Chleboun was puzzled by my caution, since customarily such transactions were done in cash, hand to hand. The leaders of the NTUC were not enchanted when they discovered that the handover would now have to take place via a bank and were puzzled when I requested a receipt. But they listened when I argued with them that the WFTU would respect them more if they reported back that they had underspent on the seminar and what they proposed to do with the surplus. They did underspend and they didn't report it. I put a lot of energy into this event – fondly remembered by Nigerian participants for many years after. I met real workers and working unionists there. I also got a lot *out* of this visit since I used the opportunity to do interviews and collect documents and newspapers. This trip also determined the rest of my life.

Lagos is a city it is easy to love – and loathe. On the one hand it is, like Calcutta, and Manila, an urban-planning disaster. It is overcrowded, jammed with traffic, slum-ridden, noisy and noisome, with any possible historical centre or other attractions hidden or forgotten, its rivers or lagoons full of human or inhuman waste, its air polluted. On the other hand it is, like those other cities, bursting with human life, drama, energy, the struggle for existence, and the celebration of this in music, song and dance. A day after my arrival there was some national or religious holiday and I was quite overwhelmed by the variety and beauty of the costumes, female and male. Also by the dark velvet skins of the women, their exotic and elaborate hair-styles, their slow and majestic passage, their look of similarly majestic disdain. This was the 1960s, so the young educated women were wearing US-style Afros and, if not mini-dresses, 'mini-wraps'. Life was carried on at the top of its voice, either in one of many Nigerian tongues or in 'the common language'. This is known by the English as 'pidgin', but it is a highly-developed language, with its own vocabulary and grammar, incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Such English as was spoken had a rich, musical and infectious West African swing.

In a big market, just before crossing a causeway into Lagos proper, I bought fruit, stared at strange dried animal parts, medicines (Western and Nigerian) and a collection of decorated black and earthenware pottery to take home. The trade unionists laughed at me for buying 'bush' dishes when I

could have got blue plastic ones which would last much longer. I also got myself gorgeous loose blue and white tie-dyed shirts to wear over my European shorts.

I met up in his architect's office with Ade Thomas, my colleague from the IUS, now involved in some non-threatening elite political activity. He invited me out to eat in a Chinese restaurant in the commercial centre of Lagos – there was at that time no such thing as Nigerian restaurant cuisine. I did not feel comfortable entering this elite eatery, with its freezing air-conditioning, its black waiters dressed up as Chinese ones; and I had to assume the cooks were Nigerian also. But this was all forgotten when we walked through a dark parking lot to Ade's car and were chased after by a legless beggar hand-pushing his rattling iron-wheeled cart across the street toward us. After the air-conditioned luxury of the restaurant, we had descended into a lower circle of Dante's Inferno. I still remember that rattle. After this experience I would keep small change (hard to obtain, as in many Third World countries) at hand, to give out quite arbitrarily.

The citizens of Lagos, mostly Yoruba but with many other ethnicities amongst them, seemed quick to lose their tempers, loud and violent in expression, and equally quick to laugh and forget. It could be unsettling. When two double-decker buses got stuck together in the city centre, I stood with my mouth open as the passengers fell upon one another with umbrellas and walking sticks. Walking to school in Yaba one morning I was petrified by two hooded and stinking figures, balancing enormous leaking drums on their heads. They were the nightsoilmen, silently carrying human piss and shit out of houses along the road. The awe-inspiring hoods were, I thought, both for protection and for anonymity. There was, anyway, no proper drainage in Lagos, so it was not only the slums or middle-class suburbs that stank. Even on luxurious Victoria Island where Ade lived there were these stinking open drains or canals.

I had been booked into a 'Lebanese' (anyway Levantine) hotel in the Yaba suburb of Lagos, within walking distance of the NTUC headquarters and the trade union school. My room was small and claustrophobic since the air-conditioning and long nights required closed and curtained windows. The room had hot-and-luke-warm water, which it would be misleading to describe as 'running'. 'English Breakfast' meant an orange-coloured poached egg, stringy bacon, an imitation of an English sausage (itself an imitation of a real one), white bread with melted margarine, bottled orange squash and Nescafe with lumps of milk powder. The bacon-and-eggs concoction floated in red palm oil. The 'Continental Breakfast' had nothing to do with any continent nearer than Europe, but was equally unappetising. One morning a Lebanese guest sat at a neighbouring table, eating pawpaw (papaya), flat bread, white cheese and drinking Turkish coffee. Could I have one like that without being a Levantine (at least not for some generations)? Of course I could. Especially since I was paying my bill in US dollars rather than Nigerian pounds.

I had arrived a week early for the course since I wanted to prepare myself and be sure the course was itself prepared. But my early arrival also enabled me to meet with the leaders of the NTUC, Wahab Goodluck and Sam Bassey, as well as the leader of the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party (SWAFP), Dr Tunji Otegbeye, and the editor of its weekly newspaper, *Advance*, Dapo Fatogun.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, it enabled me to interview them. I liked and was impressed by all of them except Otegbeye. For better or worse, I had to consult him first in his medical capacity, he being also in charge of some Soviet-financed Workers Clinic. I had passed a stone in my urine in Prague and was still leaking blood. Tunji gave me an antibiotic injection ... I think. However, I trusted him even less in his political capacity as the Lenin of the coming Nigerian revolution. He struck me as superficial and arrogant – later confirmed when I discovered that the only coherent passages within his theoretical

ramblings had been plagiarised and pasted in from a standard Soviet textbook (Kuusinen 1961). Indeed, on finding these passages in *Advance* it was the Kuusinen volume I first reached for to find the probable source. These endless tracts were regrettable since *Advance* was, despite total dependency on Soviet funding, a rather professional-looking publication.

One week after my arrival in Nigeria arrived was followed by my partner in the WFTU project, Vladimír Dvorsky. Vladimír was on the staff of the International Department of the Czech trade union confederation, the ROH. Fortunately, he had been in exile in Britain during the Second World War, spoke excellent English and was familiar with both British trade unions and industrial relations. Given the colonial heritage in Nigeria, this equipped him rather well for the course. Moreover, Vladimír was also a genuine internationalist. He had once proposed, to the shock or horror of his ROH colleagues, that solidarity funds for Vietnam be collected from workers rather than simply transferred from ROH's considerable accounts. 'Why bother the workers?' they asked. Vladimír was himself irritated that I had made my Lagos appointments not only before he came but without informing him of ones carried out after he had arrived. I was permitting my suspicion of the state-controlled unions to be carried over to their employees. And I was also considering myself more competent to do such interviews than he. And maybe I already had some idea of writing up something from my experience and did not want to share this with anyone else. I had, after all, been investing in this project for several months, had written all the non-Nigerian texts, and been negotiating the programme from the moment I had arrived.

The course was an education for me as well as for the participants. Obviously I had to adjust to the uneven educational levels of the students, their rhythm of work, as well as to the wildly-differing capacities of the various visiting Nigerian union leaders and academics. I was looking for ways of economising on, for example, the inflated sums budgeted for such visitors. But I was later ashamed of one decision I had pressed on the NTUC. This was to save money on hostel accommodation by setting up beds on the empty second floor of the school. I had calculated that it would be more economic to buy beds, mattresses and even electric fans in the market and to sell them back later. I had not taken account of electricity breakdowns, nor of the absence of mosquito netting. As for food, this was provided by another Party project in the neighbourhood, the Executive De Inn. Students took all their meals here. I took only lunch. Meat with gari, meat with rice, meat with plantain, then unfiltered water or bottled Fanta. Meat further unspecified but usually full of fat, chipped-off bone and gristle. And all with pepper-spiced palm oil. I had here two problems: Nigerians eat more pepper in their food than any other nationality I had – and have – ever met; my medical advice before I had left Prague had been to stay away from spicy food. Every day I said, 'No pepper, OK?', every day the waiter repeated my words, everyday the food was highly peppered. One day I heard one of the Nigerian students complain that the food was too peppery. I then did research in the kitchen and discovered that, in preparing my food, the cook was tipping out the peppered palm oil but cooking my food in the same pan ... and such oil as inevitably remained.

The NTUC was an interesting organisation that has never been adequately researched.<sup>15</sup> It had behind it the traditions of the 1945 General Strike, the alliance with radical nationalism, and the organising struggles of the later-1950s when other union centres collapsed into regionalism. Although it was created before the SWAFP, it was a Communist body. The men who had created it in 1962 were either long-standing (pro-) Communists or from organisations that had been associated with the British Communist Party. The size and influence of the NTUC was difficult to assess, due to the exaggerated competitive claims that unions made in Nigeria. Its own claim that it had more than

250,000 members has to be discounted. It is unlikely that all union centres in Nigeria combined had this number of members. Furthermore, when I was there, a considerable proportion of NTUC-affiliated unions would have been in Biafra, the former Eastern Region, totally cut off from the rest of the country by the civil war then raging. I was to find out a few years later that within the whole of the vast North, the NTUC was dependent upon one or two organisers who could demonstrate little or no following. Possibly the NTUC had a similar number of members to the rightwing United Labour Congress (ULC). Each of these was affiliated with and financially dependent upon a major international organisation, the ULC with the Brussels-based and Western-orientated ICFTU, and the NTUC with the WFTU (at one moment informally, later formally). The NTUC was the most important star in the Nigerian Communist constellation. It was the only one that had social roots, experience of struggle and significant contact with a section of the working population. It also had a considerable resource in its core of experienced labour leaders (secretaries of one or more unions), its younger militant organisers, a head office, school and newspaper, and its radical ideology. The course I was running was, of course, meant to better equip these secretaries and organisers. In the meantime, however, the school was alerting me to other possibilities.

It was the school that first opened my eyes – or at least my previously limited imagination – to the possibilities of academia. I befriended a young Nigerian university lecturer at the Patrice Lumumba Labour Academy. He was a former post-office clerk who had been sponsored by the NTUC to study in the Soviet Union. At some point during the seminar he invited me to dinner at his bachelor pad on the campus of Lagos University. This turned out to be a large bungalow, big enough for a whole (European) family, and equipped with a large refrigerator, a ‘boy’ and at least one bottle of whisky. I had never seen such academic luxury even in the UK. But whilst I was somewhat shocked by this, I was amazed when he asked me why I didn’t become, like him, a lecturer in economics at the university. I said, but I only have a BA, and I don’t really understand economics anyway. He said, of course you do, I have heard your classes! I didn’t take him seriously. But he at least planted in my mind the idea that university lecturers were not, like Communists, people of a special mould. It now occurred to me that becoming an academic might be a matter of effort rather than brilliance.

A stronger push in an academic direction was provided by this white South African guy I met at the earlier-mentioned Executive De Inn, Yaba, a few streets away from the NTUC’s school. The Executive De was the ‘movement’ restaurant. In other words, it had been set up by the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party with money from the Communist world. It catered to movement people and office workers. So I was actually somewhat miffed at the appearance at the Executive De of a tallish, red-haired South African who was also clearly Jewish (it takes one to recognise one). Previously I had considered myself a Communist Dr Livingstone, boldly going where no white man had gone before. However, if I was not Dr Livingstone then he was not Henry Stanley either. Robin Cohen turned out, more usefully, to be a South African socialist doing PhD research on Nigerian trade unionism,<sup>16</sup> whilst based at the University of Ibadan. He invited me to visit him there, which I did, and he then asked me whether I wouldn’t want to do a master’s degree at Birmingham University, to which he had an attachment. It was encouraging that he was a socialist, even if he early admitted to me that when given movement papers to sell in the UK, his distaste for street politics would lead him to pay for them and then secretly dump them in a bin. Robin came over as a slow or relaxed, if not a diffident, person. I later discovered he was simply the most laid-back academic entrepreneur I had ever met. He not only broadened out from labour to migration and social movement studies but during the long period of left disenchantment or disorientation, in the 1980s-90s, he held on to his political commitment – although he never made the grade as a newspaper seller. Our paths were to cross not

only in Birmingham but in other places, on other occasions.

## Prague: Abnormal Times Again?

I should give a picture of our domestic life in Prague, not only because of its exotic and then cosmopolitan character but also for the minor role it played – at least for us – during the Soviet invasion.

Zahradní Město Západ means Garden Town West. The original suburb must have been idyllic in the Prague of the interwar years. It consisted of two-storey houses with front gardens. It was grey and rundown by the 1960s, but nicely sited between the centre, maybe 30 minutes by bus, and the public park and reservoir lake at Hostivař, fifteen minutes further out. The West part was the new estate of multi-storey blocks, being built as we moved in. We had a first-floor apartment with two bedrooms, a kitchen/diner and a sitting-room. It was utilitarian and badly-finished, the wind whistled round the double windows. The main light in the sitting-room didn't work, simply because it had been wrongly wired and, evidently, untested. We found out because Ruthie had friends from her old kibbutz who had returned to Prague, Dana and Miki, and Miki was an electrician. As for the windy windows, you could either put your name down on a list and wait forever, or get them fixed privately, and illegally, which is what we did. It was the first new, real, apartment we had ever had and we were happy to have it. The rent was low and simply extracted from my pay.

The estate itself must have looked good on paper. It had a nursery, primary school, a communal laundry, and it later got a shopping complex with a supermarket. But when we moved in, Xmas 1966, we had to wade through ankle-deep mud, since the Czechs (or Communists?) believed in putting the roads in last rather than first. The communal laundry worked fitfully and then closed down, communally, forever. We were lucky to live on the first floor, since the lifts repeatedly broke down. The supermarket was convenient but dreary, and infected by the customary Communist plague of shortages. *Není* and *nemáme* (there isn't any, we haven't got any) were two expressions easy to learn. When there was glass in the yoghurt, the people in the shop would say, 'What's it got to do with us?'. On finding maggots in the flour, we decided to circumvent the monkey and go straight to the organ-grinder. Neatly-wrapped and accompanied by a letter of complaint (and the ridicule of our Czech translator), it was posted to the Ministry. There was no acknowledgement. Possibly the Minister had other problems on his mind than those of keeping maggots out of flour – or satisfying consumers. When an increasingly deep hole developed in one of the new roads out of the estate, it remained for six months or longer, no one from the neighbouring allotment thinking of chucking a couple of spades of earth or stones into it. When everything belongs to everybody, no actual person is responsible for anything.

The medical services varied from the elite clinic for foreigners (including foreign staff of the WFTU) to the extremely patchy public services. We had bad experiences calling for ambulances or emergency services.<sup>17</sup> And a worse one when I came down with high fever and was eventually hospitalised.

Being in an ambulance turned out to be even worse than waiting for one. This one seemed to have no such suspension as we were accustomed to from bourgeois ambulances or even normal cars. And it delivered me to an isolation hospital on a Sunday evening. Unfortunately, I had not packed the snack Ruthie had prepared for me, along with a fruit knife. It was not yet night but I had arrived too late for

a meal – or a doctor. When they rustled up something for me, there was no knife (the hospital apparently thinking that ‘infection’ implied ‘murderous or suicidal intent’: in my case they were right – even though I had no infection). I was freezing, then drenched in sweat and hallucinating. Fortunately, the night nurse took pity on me and changed my sheets and blankets several times. By the time I eventually saw a doctor and had a blood test, they could find nothing. I was sent home. One month later I had a second attack. Our friends in Vienna had asked whether I hadn’t maybe had a *malaria* attack. This time we drove straight to the hospital for a blood test, which confirmed the malaria. I could hardly blame the Czechs for not recognising the illness, with which they had no familiarity. And experiencing the medical services that the Czechs had to live permanently with was salutary. But the locals, as usual, could checkmate (no pun necessarily intended) any of our little horror stories. One young friend told of having to bribe a hospital nurse to get painkillers for her dying mother. And the customary private ‘compensation’ of the miserably-paid general practitioners was not only tolerated by their patients but defended. Vladimír, our foreign-trade neighbour, was having severe problems with his son (or vice versa). But there was no such thing as child psychiatry or, for that matter, psychiatry in Czecho (bourgeois? decadent? not the Soviet example?). Vladimír was therefore confronted with the option of keeping his son at home or putting him in one.

Once we had an apartment, we needed to furnish it, to buy bed-clothes, and to return what had been kindly lent to us by colleagues or friends. We had shipped our books in the original Oxford apple-boxes, which were turned round to become our shelves. I had brought my tools and skills (remember *Do-it-Yourself* magazine?). I had even had the foresight to bring capitalist wallplugs. But, silly me, I had forgotten screws. Now, on the Malé náměstí, in the Old Town, fifteen minutes from the WFTU, there had just been reopened a famous pre-war hardware store, Rott. Unfortunately it closed daily for lunch. This was not *intended* to prevent office-workers from buying anything during their lunch breaks. But there was clearly no profit in meeting customer needs. Every month, like all stores, it closed a couple of days for ‘inventář’ (stocktaking). Socialist Rott never had anything one needed: *není, nemáme*. Having heard our complaints, foreign visitors would say, ‘but the shops are full of goods and shoppers’. ‘Yes’, I would reply, ‘they are full of goods no one wants and people looking for things they don’t have’. In this socialised version of a hardware store, it would often look as if it was the Month of the Electric Iron, or the Year of the Green Ten Liter Plastic Watering Can. Even when the shops did have something attractive that you wanted, the first thing you had to do on getting it home was to screw it together properly or glue it. One day I was in the private vegetable market that the regime had daringly permitted to open off the Old Town Square. My carrots were wrapped in pages of a catalogue from the prewar Rott hardware store. There were pages of differently-sized screws – of different kinds of *metal*! I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Jesus would have wept.

Meanwhile, at least the youngsters in Prague were circumventing the 10-year-old dowdy fashions of the 1950s. The boys had long hair, both boys and girls were wearing jeans. This meant somehow or other obtaining them on the black market, getting them from foreign family or friends, or buying them off tourists.

Once our children had adapted to Prague, it was great having schools so close and the kids in them all day. This made it possible, after a couple of months, for Ruthie to get a part-time job, correcting or anyway improving the English in the WFTU bulletins. Since none of the teachers spoke anything but Czech, Danny had a tough time at first, complaining to us pathetically that he couldn’t tell the kids about the electricity failure that had stopped all the trams on Wenceslas Square. And the teaching was – as Viennese friends later confirmed – done on some Austro-Hungarian rather than any existing or

imaginable socialist model. It was not, in other words, intended to produce lively, creative children.

With our good joint salary, low living costs, and some hard currency from the WFTU, we could afford to buy a secondhand car. Accompanied by our Chilean friend, Hanns (see below) – no particular expert but a German speaker and car owner – we went to Nuremberg. We took with us handfuls of Czech three-crown coins, which by accident or design were the exact size of one German mark. This was an excellent exchange rate and all we had to do in Nuremberg was 1) purchase this big old Peugeot 304, and 2) raid the slot machines for chocolates, beer, tights, chewing-gum. A little high on this game, Ruthie and Hanns decided to take revenge for everything the Nazis had done to them or their families. They went shoplifting whilst I stood disapproving at the door. It didn't prevent me eating the stolen bananas. But having adapted myself earlier to Western Germany, it gave me no particular kick to go rollicking through the streets joining them in their jointly-excellent German, to sing 'The Whore of Nuremberg'.

The car enabled us to drive to Hostivař lake, summer weekends, up the Vltava to Slapy Dam, to go camping in picturesque Moravia with Ruthie's leftwing Danish friends, Hanne and Henning. They had four children, all with reddish hair, several of them with security blankets. Walking along the streets of some small Moravian town with these in tow, and them abandoning their blankets only to gulp from one-litre bottles of milk, gave the staid locals something to remember. Unfortunately, we lent our Peugeot to Pablo. He was a Chilean student who had previously worked as a mechanic (he said) and thus worked as ours in Prague. Coming home pissed one night, he drove over the raised pavement of a tram stop, burst two tyres and severely dented two wheel rims. He replaced the tyres. And then we went with him one night to a suburban factory where we literally heaved the wheels over the fence to the friend-of-a-friend inside. The oil that smoothed the wheels of the state-owned anti-economy was provided by this kind of operation. Five years later, in The Hague, an exiled Czech philosopher told me that the only thing worse than the fetishism of commodities was the fetishism without the commodities. He said that Czechs spent a large amount of their working time and their creative energy in making three- or multi-cornered private deals between what they could provide and what they needed.

Our invisible friend fixed the wheels perfectly, and at reasonable cost. I can't remember whether he threw them back, but he certainly convinced me of the sterling technical capacities and entrepreneurial qualities of the Czech proletariat. The Peugeot went through other adventures that confirmed this confidence. Just before the Soviet invasion, I actually managed to fracture the Peugeot's engine block, driving too fast and too carelessly up a lane to the *chata* (country cottage) of a retired colonel. During the invasion, my main personal worry was not so much 'escaping to the West' in principle but having enough oil to be able to reach the border in practice. We were eventually informed that the car either had to have a new engine or be considered a write-off. One way or another we sold it on to a couple of other bouncing Czechs. They came to visit us with it some months later. They had driven it to Plzeň, a historical centre of Czech industry (and Pilsener), where they had disassembled the car in someone's garage, built a furnace, and *welded* the engine together again. A pity, indeed, that these qualities didn't go into the production, distribution and exchange of the socialist Škoda. Czechs had no respect for their own cars, the Tatra (which looked and sounded like a V2 rocket and was reserved for the party/state elite) or the Škoda. In town one would see Czechs bent over the latest Western car, murmuring, 'that's a model, man!'. Škoda, in Czech, means, unfortunately, 'a pity'. When they were later exported to the UK, they became the butt of popular disdain:

**Q.** What's the difference between getting out of a Škoda and getting out of a sheep?

**A.** It's less embarrassing if someone sees you getting out of a sheep.

I had better conclude our car (mis)adventures here. Xmas 1968, we spent outside Copenhagen with Hanne and Henning. We here attended our best-dressed Anti-Vietnam-War demo ever: fur, or sheepskin, coats were *de rigueur*. Temporarily carless, however, we had decided to buy a secondhand Saab, over the water in Malmö. I got one for \$400. The little two-stroke Saab, fitted out at the back with plywood supports so that you could put the back seats down and sleep in it, had for Czechs the allure of all that cars had once been and ought to be (even the artisan element appealed). I put our luggage in the car but – fortunately, as it turned out – sent Ruthie and the kids back to Prague by train. Halfway across the German Democratic Republic to Berlin, the phut-phut pattered out. My suspicion was that the guy at the petrol pump had been pissed off when I had paid him in East German Marks rather than money, and filled me up with ordinary Eastern petrol rather than two-stroke. Here I finally realised the value of at least institutional internationalism. I contacted the International Department of the FDGB, which put me up in a hotel and later hauled the Saab to Checkpoint Charlie. This I had looked at with fascinated horror during the Berlin Youth Festival, 1951. It had later figured in one or two hotter moments of the Cold War. It also turned up in the disenchanting spy novels of people like John Le Carré. Well, I literally pushed my Saab through the frontline of the Cold War. Then got it hauled to the Saab garage. All this had to be managed in the three months of German I had done in the British Army. I went back to East Berlin while they fixed it. Then I picked it up and tested it on the autobahn in West Berlin. It pattered out again. I sat down and howled like a dog. The police took me back to the garage, where the hard-faced West German proletarians expressed no visible solidarity, though they were prepared to haul it back to Checkpoint Charlie – for a price.

I won't go into how, in two stages, I got it hauled back to Prague. (Well, umm, OK. The FDGB hauled it to the border. And our new young English interpreter friend at the WFTU, Mike, hauled it, with his car, back to Prague). Nor will I detail the stressful wait whilst the one Saab garage in Prague ordered the spare parts and re-bored the engine. Nor even the complex operations by which Vladimír, from upstairs, eventually bought the car from us, but lost our friendship by laying immediate claim to it whilst Ruthie and the kids still had to be fetched from Dana's *chata*. What I do, however, have to say is that the sale involved trusting that the corrupt intermediary, in the state-owned Tuzex corporation, was an honest crook (he was, he had a thriving business and a reputation to preserve). Vladimír had got a large amount of crowns from his collective farmer parents, who were just beginning to benefit from agricultural reforms and could not or would not spend the cash they had saved. Suffice it to say that for an investment of \$600, and several years off my life, we made enough money for the family to live on for one year in Birmingham whilst I did my Master's in West African Studies. And later, of course, with such cosmopolitan experiences behind me, to become a specialist (if a sceptical one) on international solidarity.

## **Comrades, Friends and Fellow Workers**

Soon after Ruthie's arrival at the end of 1966, we began building up a small circle of friends on the estate. Before she began at the WFTU, Ruthie was doing private teaching of Dutch and English. This was how we met Maria, who had stopped having sex with her husband but had – like so many others –

no other possible accommodation even had she wanted to separate from him. One of Ruthie's students of English was Ludmila, a middle-aged clerical worker, whose husband was dying at home. The other was the just-mentioned Vladimír who worked for one of the state foreign-trade concerns. He was actually involved in official, if secret, Czechoslovak trade with Apartheid South Africa. Ostensibly it was with Botswana. On his return from this, his first-ever trip abroad, he defended the Czechoslovak breach of a trade ban the state officially supported, telling us how nice the whites were to the blacks in Johannesburg. 'When they get in the lift, they always say "Good morning John" to the lift-operator.' Our kids, of course, made their own friends. This began with the sleigh on a snow-covered path outside our block, where they learned their first Czech word, *pozor!* (watch out!). Then it was the two half-gipsy boys, living a couple of floors up, wild and noisy where the other Czech kids were quiet and well-behaved.

And then, just as Ruthie had found Paule in the park in North Oxford, she found Choli whilst shopping on the estate. Hanns and Choli were Communist Jews from Chile. Hanns was of Sudeten Jewish origin and had fled as a child from the Nazi occupation. I suppose that his father felt (wrongly as it turned out) that Chile was as far away as one could possibly get from fascism. Hanns was a failed businessman who was training as a singer, and teacher of singing, at the academy in Prague. Choli was a journalist, now working on the Spanish section of Radio Prague. They had three kids, Vera who was in awful teenager mode, Pauli who was in the middle somewhere, and Carlita, who was the same age as Danny. Their flat was the same size as ours, but their family was bigger and at one time they even sublet one room to a Chilean student couple. Despite our shared ethnic and political background, they were, as Latin Americans, quite exotic to us. Their house was always full, noisy and messy, with drooping kids up all hours. Hanns and Choli had moved from left Zionism into Communism, and Hanns was some kind of senior Chilean Communist in Prague – at least in age. They were both multilingual, though Hanns complained that he spoke four languages perfectly, all with a Yiddish accent. Hanns was chubby, irreverent and extrovert, Choli thin, intellectual and intense. We were in and out of each other's flats, trading horror stories, Jewish and Anti-Communist jokes – not to speak of Jewish Anti-Communist ones. We introduced our Czech friends and foreign visitors to each other, shared meals and survived Communism together.

Things happened to Hanns.<sup>18</sup> Thus, he went back to his home town to look at the family house and factory. Here he met an old friend of his father who, over drinks, retailed the customary horror stories about life under Communism. Hanns, who had recently arrived in Prague, felt increasingly uncomfortable under this stream of complaint. 'Look', he said, 'You know my father but you don't know me'. He then pulled out of his pocket his Chilean Communist Party membership card. 'Oh', said the man, pulling a Czech Party card out of his own pocket, 'I've got one of those too'. Not so funny was the occasion on which Hanns was looking after a veteran working-class Chilean Communist delegate, whom he had had to deliver to the Party's hotel for foreign visitors. When Hanns picked him up the following day, the Chilean comrade told him he had changed a few dollars for crowns with the porter. Hanns then severely damaged the guy's faith in socialism by telling him that this was illegal. When he found out how many crowns the Chilean comrade had got for his few dollars, Hanns added that the Czech comrade had also ripped him off by paying him under the well-established black-market rate of exchange.

We also became close to my old American ISS friend, Joy Moss-Kohoutova. Joy and Jiří lived in another such estate as ours, on the other side of a valley and river, not yet built over. We could walk there and the kids could play with theirs, the same age as ours since they had been latecomers. Joy and

Jiří were five or ten years older than us, but Jiří still had his blond, boyish looks. He was the introvert, she the extrovert. They neither drank nor smoked and Jiří jogged. He was a party member and worked at some academy on a Russian-Czech dictionary. Joy was still very much the Communist but had never joined the Czech party. She might have been working fulltime in some international organisation at this time, but she would have also been doing freelance translation. If Jiří was determined about his Communism, Joy would dismiss the problems and enthuse about the principle or about the way things were gradually improving.

Dana and Miki, earlier mentioned, had jumped out of the Israeli frying pan back into the Czechoslovak freezer. Well, originally, of course, they had survived the Nazi furnaces and gone to Israel. There they had been on the same socialist kibbutz as Ruthie. But they had eventually become disenchanted with Israel and returned to Prague. I don't recall ever meeting such a sad couple. They lived in a decent apartment, actually in the same street as the FAMU film school I had frequented the first time I was in Prague. She was involved in some dreary and badly-paid homeworking. They had two nice girls. They also had a little *chata* on a river, maybe thirty minutes by train from Prague. And as Miki was a technician they were gradually improving it. As Ruthie noted, it was only in the end on holiday that the Czechs really came alive. Or that we saw them come alive.

My only real Czech friend at work was my charming, but burned-out, co-educator colleague and senior, Jaroslav Těhle. Jarda was a friendly and sophisticated person who looked – as he proudly proclaimed – more like a southern than a northern Slav. His habitual appearance was one of exhaustion, in part due to a mountaineering accident in the Soviet Union. He was a post-1945 Communist, who spent much of his – of our – time in the office telling me stories about African union politicking, the WFTU's contributions to such, the history and culture of Czechoslovakia, his modest if courageous role in the uprising at the end of the Second World War, his arbitrary persecution at the height of Stalinism in the early-1950s. All of this was highly educative but hardly productive (or, it was hardly productive but highly educative). It was Jarda, of course, who told me about the Stalinist rain that had followed the reign of Stalin. Before coming to the WFTU he had worked in the Education Department of the national trade union organisation, the ROH (a body with its origins in the Profintern of the 1930s). He had also produced the usual propaganda tracts for the ROH (Těhle 1961). Jarda had high-school education but was further self-educated. This was true also for his fluent French and his limited English. His mode of operation was strictly artisanal. When he had to prepare a course for North Africa, he would do urgent, late and rapid work with scissors and paste, reconstructing previous texts. He was without ambition or arrogance. He was once told in the Soviet Union that he could get a PhD on the basis of his teaching texts and reports. All he had to do was add an introduction and conclusion and they would translate the whole into Russian. But Jarda was too modest to accept such a patched-together doctorate. With the foreign currency saved from his travel per diems he bought, from the Tuzex dollar shops in Prague, not the electric equipment others dreamed of but crates of his favourite Czech beer when this was unavailable for crowns. His ambition in life was to retire to a forester's cottage somewhere in Bohemia. Jarda threw himself body and soul into the Prague Spring. I think there was not too much soul left following the invasion and 'normalisation'. After I left the Communist world in 1969 (and the world of Communism in 1970), it was Jarda who purged selected fellow office reformists, stating to me later 'it's better that I did this than some Stalinist'. Which raises the question of whether one has to talk like one, rather than act like one, to be called one. The last sign of life I have been able to find of him is his editing of a history of the Czechoslovak unions (Těhle 1984). I *have* found his name in a post-1989 listing of StB agents. But the listing was unofficial and disputed. I hope that he wasn't an agent of the secret police as well as the Party. He was a good

man but in the well-known wrong-place/wrong-time. I was very fond of Jarda and, whilst writing this chapter, had a dream about being in his apartment in Prague, chatting warmly (in what possible language?) with his wife – physically ill and psychologically traumatised from their treatment in the 1950s. On the one occasion in two and a half years, on which I, or we, had been invited to his apartment, Jarda had had to translate for her ....

The South African in the African Department was Mark Shope, a historical leader of the South African trade union movement, but in Prague a landed fish, who talked little, apparently knew no Czechs, spoke no Czech, and seemed to live only for the rare trips to meet his ANC comrades in East Africa. When he told us that his wife was coming, we helped move him into an apartment. Gertrude, when she turned up, was a much warmer person. I was not too surprised to later find she had become a leading figure within the ANC and then a Member of Parliament. Mark's distance from me may have been a matter of political distrust on his part. He was a true believer and I wasn't. When I met him by chance, many years later, at Lagos Airport, I greeted him with pleasure, but he refused my out-held hand and walked straight by. It was only after his death in 1998 that I came to understand what Mark was really doing in Czechoslovakia at that time. These are extracts from an obituary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU):

Cde Mark Shope was the former General Secretary of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). He represented SACTU at the World Federation of Trade Unions, which was based in Prague, Czechoslovakia. He was the founder member of Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and also of the Southern African Trade Union Co-ordinating Council (SATUCC). He was a self-taught educator. This was evident by the fact that he was for a long time heading the education department of SACTU. He was a Commissar in the people's army Umkhonto We Sizwe. He was taught to read and write by the Communist party. He was one of South Africa's outstanding working class intellectuals, who embraced the revolutionary philosophy of Marxism-Leninism.

Cde Shope was a staunch internationalist and a close friend of the former Soviet Union and other socialist countries including Cuba. He represented the South African Congress of Trade Unions at all the international trade union and labour conferences, particularly the ILO annual Conferences. He was primarily instrumental in training trade union cadres from home during the underground struggle in exile, and also in the underground structures internally.

As an MK soldier, he was amongst the first MK people who went for training in the Soviet Union. He was a leading member of the South African Communist Party. He represented the ANC in Nigeria as a Chief Representative to garner support from Nigerians to support the SA Struggle.<sup>19</sup>

Mark, it thus appears, was a figure more typical of the (semi-)clandestine Communist unionists of the Profintern period than of that of the WFTU. But, then, the position of the South African people and workers was also more typical of that past period also.

The British contingent already at the WFTU when I arrived consisted of the Communists Brian Barton, of Tim Webb, and of Tim's apolitical and rather dumb friend (whose name escapes me). Brian Barton, married with two kids, lived two or three tram stops from us. But he did WFTU work with the

ILO or the UN, in Geneva or New York, and we didn't see so much of him. Tim was living with a Czech girl he eventually married. They went to the UK where Tim became a regional secretary for some trade union. One way or another, each of these guys, couples or families had their own lives in Prague so there was no such community of Brits as we had had at the IUS. With Brian Bicat<sup>20</sup> and his wife, Inger, Gerry Pocock and his wife, Ann, it was clearly different insofar as these had been friends and comrades in Oxford, and they had kids more or less the age of ours. I seem to recall Ann and Gerry turning up after the invasion, but Brian and Inge arrived earlier, which is how he was involved with Monty Johnstone and me in writing our protest letter against the Soviet invasion to the British CP. Our relations with these friends were more domestic than political. I have earlier suggested that insofar as the British unions had no formal relations with the WFTU, and since the British CP was concentrating on national union work, it had an ever-decreasing interest in the organisation. Or, for that matter, in us. So that whilst the Chilean CP might have had a continuing interest in the Chilean Communist community in Prague, the British one did not even consult us on the Soviet invasion! When Sam Russell, Foreign Editor of the *Morning Star* was in Prague, in the wake of the invasion, he didn't even give us a buzz.<sup>21</sup> With occasional exceptions, I guess we considered ourselves technicians or professionals, thus recognising the lack of interest in us of both the party we came from and the organisation we were working for. We might lunch together, go on picnics with each other and various Czech friends, and gossip together. But that was about it.

We became good friends of Marita and Ibrahim. Ibrahim was an Iraqi Communist who had been, at a late moment, the Arabic editor of *World Student News*. This was the IUS magazine of which I had been the English editor in a previous decade. But he was now the Iraqi representative on *World Marxist Review*, the last gasp of the international Communist movement, which had its offices in Prague. Marita was Finnish. They had met as students in Paris and French was their common language. And, in between his two periods in Prague, she had accompanied him, in 1959, back to Baghdad. There she had worked at the Finnish embassy. But he, as a Communist, had fallen foul of one authoritarian regime or another – or one after the other. He had survived in hiding, evidently supported by Marita. As a couple of cosmopolitan Communists, we got on well with them. I remember going with them to the apartment of Hanns and Choli, where Hanns, in an apron, was doing the cooking. He, hoping to shock at least the Arab one, said, 'I just have to breastfeed the baby and I'll be right with you'. And then there were the predictably intense discussions about Israel, which in 1967 had launched its victorious six-day war against Egypt and Syria. As we will see below, we also shared with them the Soviet invasion. Eventually, after we left, they also left Prague and *again* returned to Iraq.<sup>22</sup>

When the Prague Spring really took off, around April 1968, we were overwhelmed by visitors from the West who had come to see 'Socialism with a Human Face'.<sup>23</sup> At the same time we were helping our Czech neighbours to go, for the first time in their lives, to visit the West. At one moment I think we had three sets of apartment keys. When the Russians invaded, we had in our house my old friend YCL and CP dissident friend, Monty Johnstone, his wife Val, and one or two of their kids. We also hosted, maybe earlier, my Youth Against the Bomb and YCL friend, John Hoyland, his new wife, Wisty and their even newer baby. John and Wisty were definitely of the Flower Power generation, long, thin, scruffy, grass-smoking, and less particular about the cleanliness of their baby than we would have been. John informed us, straight-faced, that the major cultural phenomenon of the decade was the Beatles. We had just about heard of the Beatles but the idea of a pop group as the vanguard of world culture had not occurred to us, isolated as we were on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain, in the middle of another kind of cultural revolution. John and Wisty also turn up, in photos in Sheila

Rowbotham's evocative account of the 1960s (Rowbotham 2000:Photos 7,8). Here John looks even thinner. He was now heavily involved with the independent Marxist paper, *Black Dwarf*.

Thirty-five years later I still meet people who tell me they had been at our place in Prague at this time. One was Sarah from Oxford, with her little girl, Zillah. I had simply forgotten they had been there. Not only were we mentally and emotionally overwhelmed by the Prague Spring, but in this same half year I had been to Nigeria for a month, and then on a short diplomatic trip to the Guinea of Sekou Toure. Because I had no warning of this trip, I forgot to take my anti-malarials, and there was no one at the WFTU who was responsible for reminding staff about such matters. So this is how I got my dose of malaria. It took me a good six months to fully recover. I could have died and I don't suppose that the WFTU would have provided Ruthie with more than some token compensation and tickets home. Anyway, the result of all this and the eventual invasion was that I have forgotten all but a few of those who visited at this time.

## **August 1968: The Re-imposition of Abnormality**

### **August 1968**

*The Ogre does what ogres can,  
Deeds quite impossible for Man,  
But one prize is beyond his reach,  
The Ogre cannot master Speech.  
About a subjugated plain,  
Among its desperate and slain,  
The Ogre stalks with hands on hips  
While drivel gushes from his lips.*

**W.H. Auden<sup>24</sup>**

So far I have mentioned the Soviet invasion in passing or dealt with the WFTU reaction to it. It is time to deal with it in more detail and as we experienced it.<sup>25</sup> I kept a diary for the first four or five days of the invasion. I now find curious what I did and didn't put in the diary. Some of my own recollections can be dated, others not. The chronological order is blurred. On the first day of the invasion, for example, I went to the office, where, as stated earlier, I exchanged shocked words with my department head, Chleboun. I came back home to report what I had seen. In the meantime, Czech passive resistance had turned, pathetically, to removing road signs and even our names next to the bells at the front of our block. The illuminated direction signs at the major road junctions, which had only been introduced a year or so previously, were all smashed. I guess that it was about midnight that we got to bed.

But, despite having been up since five a.m., I could not sleep. I began reading Wyndham's (1959) science fiction novel, *The Day of the Triffids*. It seemed appropriate to the invasion of the Soviet triffids.<sup>26</sup> I had just about fallen into exhausted sleep when, at around five a.m. on Thursday the 22nd, the bell rang. I opened the front door to find Robin Blackburn (then the shaggy-haired Editor of *New Left Review*) and his beautiful Chinese wife (who later died, tragically young). She had her hair *en bouffant* and wore a chic green minisuit. He carried a big red Samsonite suitcase. Who was living in the real world? *We* were living in the khaki and iron socialist world of the 1940s where politics was a

matter of who had the most tanks and the least scruples. In our world they painted on the walls, 'A Nation That Oppresses Others Cannot Itself Be Free (Karl Marx)'. Or 'Come Back Lenin, Brezhnev's Gone Crazy!'. They came from a brightly-coloured capitalist world, with news of other 1968s, where students shouted 'Demand the Impossible Now'.<sup>27</sup> Robin and his wife had been on their way from an event in Austria to another in Scandinavia. Their train had crossed the border without problems but then stopped for the duration at a suburban station that happened to be near our suburb. Robin had been invited to Prague by Monty, who was a friend of his and a contributor to NLR. Later, As Robin and I watched the nervous Soviet tank crews and anguished crowds in the debris-covered Wenceslas Square, he asked me whether it was not time to break with Communism. Of course it was, but at that moment I was more concerned with getting enough oil and petrol to *escape* it if necessary. Shortly afterwards I started having a new recurrent dream: of five minutes on Soviet TV, during which I poured out scorn, ridicule and righteous anger on Brezhnev, in front of an audience of 200 million.

Here are some fragments from my anyway fragmented 'invasion diary', covering August 20-25.<sup>28</sup> What is inside the square brackets has been added now by me.

## **Tuesday, August 20**

At nine o'clock in the evening a group of us shook hands with Jiří Pelikán, Head of Czechoslovak Television, outside his headquarters in Gorky Square. We had spent two hours with him talking about the democratisation process. I had fixed up the discussion with him for a Communist friend [Monty Johnstone] from England and took along also two Latin American comrades.

He was nervous and inattentive, having one eye on the TV set across the room, answering phone calls, and talking with an assistant. But he still wanted to talk with us, and even promised me that we would meet again the following week to discuss the last question I put to him. This was on the forms of struggle against deformations of socialism during the Novotny era. This was a disguised way of asking 'What did you do, how did you resist, during this period?' [Pelikán (1975) suggests independence of mind rather than political assertion].

A couple of things he said stick unforgettably in mind. He said the situation vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was extremely tense and would remain so until the Extraordinary Congress [of the Czechoslovak Party] on September 9. We followed this up by asking him whether he thought there was a danger of a Soviet invasion. He said yes, he thought there was.

We arrived home to find a small party in progress. Two Arab Communists who work in Prague were there. Mustapha [Ibrahim Al-Yitayim], who also worked with Pelikan [and me in the IUS] some years back, asked what he thought. 'He thinks that there is still a danger of a Soviet invasion'. There was a chorus of different shouts: 'You see:', 'They are terrible, these Czechs!' and so on. Look', I said, 'That's his personal view. It's not mine. That's his judgment but ours is different'.

It was not that I thought that the Soviets would not invade as a matter of principle. I knew from personal experience (particularly from study of the problem of anti-semitism in the Soviet Union a few years ago) that the present Soviet regime did not let Marxist principles discourage it from actions that could serve even the shortest-term interests. But I was convinced that, despite the continuation of such aberrations, the general post-20th Congress

development in the Soviet Union had been in the other direction. I simply believed that an invasion could not serve the interests of the Soviet Union, even as viewed by the military.

### **Wednesday, August 21**

The doorbell woke me the way it does in books. A repeated prolonged ringing forced me to the door. There stood a stony-faced group of our Latin American neighbours. I thought: one of their kids is missing. Pedro [Hanns] said, 'The Russians have invaded'.

It was five o'clock. I walked around the room. 'Are you sure? Are you sure?'. 'Listen', they said. From above the ceiling of cloud came the continuous moan of heavy aircraft. 'They're mad. They're fucking mad. Now they've bloody well done it.' Ruthie and the kids woke up. We switched on the television. It was blank.

We switched on two radios, one for the Czech broadcasts, one for foreign news. The Czech radio gave us the news. It told people to keep away from the radio building, to avoid provocations, not to build barricades. I went to call Monty and managed to wake him without disturbing Val and the kids. He came back over to our flat. We called the young Dutch couple who were staying upstairs from us. We began to think of practical problems: whether the border was open, food, petrol for the cars. Outside, people were going to work, ignorant of what was going on. We called to the guy from the waterworks. He didn't seem to understand us. Just waved and drove off. The radio was asking people to report to their workplaces anyway.

By the time we got to the shops there were big queues forming. I remember that even at the time of Hungary [November 1956] there was a panic buying of food. It had been impossible to buy many items for a fortnight after. Nobody knew what was going to happen. But everyone expected the worst and bought as much as they could afford or carry. Down at the petrol pump there was a queue a half mile long, with three tails. There was some arguing with people like myself who were going to the front with canisters. But the one woman was serving stolidly and no one was pushing. People were grouped around transistors.

Whenever it was realised we were foreigners, we were approached by Czechs speaking German. One of them: 'What do you think of this? Look what they are doing to us. That is Communism.' I answer, 'That is not Communism, that is Stalinism!' 'Ha!' he jeers at my Marxist hairsplitting. Another comes from the tyre factory across the road. It is already decorated with signs supporting Dubček and Svoboda. Others, in Russian, tell the troops to go home. The man says the factory is on strike and will stay so until the troops withdraw. He invites us over. Later, Monty goes, but I have to pick up Ruthie with the shopping and I am also concerned to get to Inge and Brian [Bicat] who may not yet know what is going on. As I turn back to our flats, Soviet jeeps with white markings come down the road from Hostivař.

### **Friday, August 23**

[...]The trade unions yesterday began preparations for going underground though they are not so far surrounded. The new Central Committee has been elected by [an extraordinary] Party Congress held secretly in Prague (probably in one of the big factories). Already

yesterday the shooting came to an end, I think. Yesterday evening a mass protest meeting had been called for Václavské Namestí, which is full of Soviet tanks. But appeals were radioed not to attend it since it might lead to bloodshed. At the time of the meeting the square was surrounded by pickets turning people away. The meeting did not take place.

Now it is midday. A General Strike of one hour has been called for. Bells and sirens are sounding over the city. The radio appeals to factory workers who wanted to go out on the streets not to do so. Svoboda [the President] is on his way to Moscow. The radio says his best support is order [...].

Yesterday we saw the statements of the Czech TUs to the world's workers and to the workers of the Warsaw Powers. The TUs also appeal to WFTU for action. The ICFTU took a position already yesterday. Unfortunately the full Secretariat is not available in Prague. It could produce a majority for the Czechs, I think. Whatever the outcome, it is difficult to imagine in what form the organisation could survive ....

## **Saturday, August 24**

A quiet day for us.

We have enough food, so no need to queue. Instead we spent the morning visiting friends. On the way we stopped to talk with Soviet soldiers. Conversation:

*Me:* I am English Communist.

*Them:* You are not Communists.

*Me:* I know what Communism is. Italian Party is against.

French Party is against.

*Them:* German Communists who fought Hitler are for us.

*Me:* I live here. I work here for World Federation of Trade Unions.

I see no counter-revolution. Where is counter-revolution? [...]

M[arita] tells us that S[Ibrahim] was in a suicidal mood the previous day. Reports about Czechs who made Russians drive on the road by standing on a grass-covered island that they had been driving over.[...]

In the evening S and M come again. S seems to have recovered enough from his suicidal mood to say that the new CP leadership has many anti-communists in it! He seems, however, to agree with me that there are more 'anti-communists' in the Soviet and other parties ....

## **Sunday, August 25**

Even quieter.

There is a Sunday mood and Sunday weather. The news reports nighttime shooting by the Soviets at police cars and anything else that moved. Although most of the radio reports seem accurate, I think one must tend to discount the most sensational items. The mass arrests did not take place. The Russians did not release criminals en masse from Pankrác (they took over the prisons mainly because the governors said they would not take anybody

in without due process of law). One would have to go to the hospitals to get the actual results of the night's occupation.

About 9.0 we go off in two cars with V[Czech Communist friend of Hanns and Choli?] to see the sights. 'Dubčekova Třída', 'Svobodova Třída', etc. We stop at the top of Václavské [Wenceslas Square] for photos of the statue of Wenceslas, crowded with young people, speakers with or without microphones, posters, flowers and slogans. The Russian tanks have wisely withdrawn off the square. A car is besieged by people seeking the latest underground newspaper or print [leaflet?]. During our morning trip we gather a good half dozen.

On the corner of Jungmannova we sight two Soviet officers. We stop the car and get out to talk to them. They do not want to stop. One is willing to talk while moving but he seems physically nervous. The other is silent. I take on the nervous one with V. Ruth tackles the other. My one listens but does not properly answer when I ask him through V whether anyone he has met has welcomed him here. He begins to tell V that they have found arms and that counter-revolutionaries have been shooting at them. He reassures us by saying that talks are going on in Moscow and everything will come out alright.

Ruthie has more luck with her one, who openly expresses his unhappiness with the situation. Just as we are finishing a Czech tells us in English that we should not speak to the Russians. The radio has asked people not to fraternise any more. Personally I find this regrettable as these guys are getting the facts of life from the Czechs. Also, of course, about the only thing we can do is to show them our Party cards and argue with them that as Communists we are against this, that it is Stalinism etc. However, I guess that if the decision is non-fraternisation it should be complied with. Anyhow there is little new to say to them and it may be one more lesson that the population is turning colder as time passes[...].

We are still all waiting for Svoboda [the President, still not returned from a forced trip to Russia] to come back. I think that the situation has normalised enough for the nation to wait several more days for his return. On Saturday many people seemed to be going to work. The shops were open. The trams and buses were running, although apparently not a complete service [...].

This evening I heard the 'official' TV. Heard because there was only a picture of Prague. They dare not show the faces of their announcers. Their programme is laughable. The arguments are puerile. They have nothing to say. The whole thing must be put up [by] the MVD or whatever the Russians call the OGPU [various names of Soviet state security] these days. There is not even an appeal to do anything such as keeping calm (which they are doing anyway at the request of their own radio) or cooperating with the occupation authorities (who never get out of their tanks).

Th[ere] are news reports of protest in the Five countries [that invaded]. Christ, what have they done to themselves? They have stored up enough internal friction to threaten each of the existing regimes. This operation could have been better organised if it had been done by the CIA. I fear for the security of the socialist world.

It was either on this day or one later that I went to Vinohradská – its change of name from Stalinova now appearing distinctly premature. On Vinohradská, a few blocks above Vaclavské, there stood the premises of Czechoslovak Radio, which had figured prominently in previous occupations and

liberations. And here I witnessed one of those peaks of the collective spirit that we need to preserve for the long troughs in which none occur. All the windows within one or two blocks of Czechoslovak Radio had been either blasted or shot out. Down on the avenue, lines of trucks with window glass were lined up. On the pavement there stood trestles where glasscutters were cutting glass to size. Others were bringing windows down, each coded for the floor, room and particular window frame. Yet other workers were putting in putty. Within a day and maybe within hours every broken window had been repaired and refitted. I had, for one out of all my days in Prague, seen the socialist division of labour, the socialist work ethic, the expression of proletarian solidarity. I had seen the future and it worked. Just for one extraordinary time and place.

The WFTU office remained closed, the shops had been stripped bare by citizens with Central European reflexes. There was no public entertainment – though I did manage to see uncut rushes of film shot by courageous cameramen. Pelikán was, of course, nowhere to be found.<sup>29</sup> At one point, indeed, the Party leadership disappeared, having been kidnapped by the Soviets and held in isolation until they agreed to a Russian-dictated formula. Only one of them refused to sign, František Kriegel (Levy 1980:293). As they were leaving, defeated, to justify themselves to a restive population (and an army that had confined itself to barracks), they could hardly avoid noting that Kriegel<sup>30</sup> (a Galician Jew, a Spain, China and Second World War veteran) was not amongst them. The Russians explained that they were keeping Kriegel, the only member of the ‘delegation’ who had refused to sign a declaration that clearly threatened what little independence Czechoslovakia had after 1948 or extended in 1968. This must have been as humiliating for the non-Jewish Party and State leaders as it was galling for the Russians. Here was a ‘rootless cosmopolitan’ now behaving as a ‘bourgeois nationalist’<sup>31</sup> – thus combining the evils that had so far prevented the inevitable global triumph of Soviet Communism. But the idea of abandoning Kriegel to the Russians was too much for the Czechoslovaks, with their memory of Masaryk’s stand against anti-semitism, and perhaps also of the shameful trials of the 1950s with which they had been complicit.<sup>32</sup> The Russians reluctantly let the Czechoslovaks have their diabetic Jew back. And the leaders of the Party-State returned to gradually permit or impose ‘normalisation’ on an increasingly depressed and defeated population.

Back in our apartment Monty, Brian Bicat and I drafted a letter to the CPGB and/or the *Morning Star*. This was eventually signed by the eight British Communists resident in Prague whom we could find:

- We totally condemn the present occupation of Czechoslovakia ....
- This invasion took place three weeks before the date fixed for the Czechoslovak Communist Party congress, the majority of whose delegates were known to support Dubček and his new course ....
- Despite the provocation of having foreign troops occupying their country for the second time in 30 years, the overwhelming majority of the Czechoslovak people ... have reacted with calm and dignity ....
- The pervading calm is due entirely to the responsible position of those Czechoslovak organisations, journals and radio stations still at liberty.
- No new government formed unconstitutionally under external pressure should under any circumstances be treated as the legitimate representative of the Czechoslovak people.
- Support the Czechoslovak Communists’ appeal to us to mobilise support .... Condemn the action of the five powers and demand the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops.

A few days later I drafted another such document, referring to the

- Extraordinary 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party, organised and held despite the occupation forces in a factory in the centre of Prague's greatest factory area. Protected by the People's Militia and the rank-and-file workers, this Congress saw the overcoming of differences between tendencies and between social groups .... It registered full support for the Dubček leadership, for the New Course and for condemnation of intervention.

There was also – for worse and for better – a crossed-out final clause:

- We believe the Soviet action to represent the crudest and most desperate actions of a degenerate, bureaucratic, autocratic Stalinism. We have confidence in the democratic, human and internationalist forces that are developing within the Soviet Union. We believe that their triumph can be speeded by the most frank and forceful expression of opinion by the world revolutionary movement.

Reflecting on this possibly unmailed document and my self-censorship of the last utopian paragraph, a strange parallel now occurs to me. This is of the character in a novel by the internally-exiled Ignazio Silone, who travels to Rome to see the great and benevolent Mussolini on a demonstration. Returning, disappointed, to his village, he declares that the real, virtuous, Mussolini has been usurped by an evil impostor. In our – or anyway my – case in Prague, with the awful evidence around me, I was still expressing faith in a real and virtuous Communism, or at least in its possibility.

One or two days after the invasion I had managed, via the British Embassy, to send a message to Ray, my mother, that we were alive and safe. On August 29<sup>th</sup> I wrote her a longer letter:

The reasons we want to hang on here are several. We feel in no personal danger. The political atmosphere is good – because there is a genuine 99 percent support for Dubček. We are now admirers of the Czech national character – for which I had only moments of appreciation in the past. We feel we are in on history and don't want to miss it .... Finally, we do have emotional ties with people and the country, having shared with them that sudden liberation of spring and the even more sudden end it was put to. There have been not many moments in my life when I could feel that I, as a Communist, was so immediately identified with the hopes of so many people. This relationship of mutual confidence and mutual development through interaction is not something I would like to give up. It is an opportunity thrown up rarely by history and that does not usually last too long.

As hope died there began a flood of apocryphal stories about the creative forms taken by the not-so-passive resistance. Some of these were grim (even Grimm) tales, such as the one about the Russians lured away from their tank by friendly Czechs, wined and dined, to return to it and find the gun had been neatly removed by an oxyacetylene torch. The jokes, of course, were finer, if only marginally less cruel:

It is one a.m. in the small Slovak town of Pavlovce nad Uhom, a few kilometers along a dusty road from the Soviet border. It also happens to be August 21, 1968 ... Grey-faced, unshaven workers from the local quarry, and labourers from the giant cooperative farm, are drowning their sorrows in beer, wine and slivovitz – successively. A lone dark gipsy in

ragged clothes plays a mournful air on his fiddle.

Suddenly the door bursts off its hinges. In the doorway stands a gigantic Soviet marine officer, flanked by smartly-dressed, blue bereted, soldiers, whose AK47s scan the small crowd. Bar tables are overturned, beer sloshes over shoes, the customers stand petrified, their hands hesitatingly over their heads.

The officer indicates that they should lower their hands and takes out a piece of paper, from which he reads, in Russian and bad Slovak: '*Tovarishchi!* You, here, new Worker, Peasant, People Government Socialist Czechoslovakia. You invite brotherly Soviet Army liberate you against West German Zionist Imperialist Revanchist *provokatsiya*. You, until 02.15 hours, please decide Ministry position. I go.'

At 2.15 he reappears, with his guards. He points at the gipsy violinist, now slumped in a corner. 'You, what Ministry you?' 'Me?'" gasps the gipsy, struggling drunkenly to his feet'. 'Me? Er ... me, *tovarish*? I'm ... well ... er ... Minister for Marine Affairs'. The Russian soldiers burst into laughter: 'Minister for Marine Affairs! In a landlocked country!' The gipsy pulls himself up to his full one meter fifty, looks at the one meter ninety Soviet officer and says, 'Why not? After all you have a Minister of Culture'.

Acts of civic courage or blind hope still occurred. There was the already-mentioned Extraordinary CP Congress. News of this was given to me by a Czech Communist historian friend, Hana Mejdrová. Our confidence in the leadership of the international proletariat was revealed by our common decision to meet in the square *outside* the WFTU, away from spying eyes or prying ears.<sup>33</sup> Then came the victory of the Czechoslovak ice-hockey team over the Soviet one, March 1969, leading to a general turnout of the population of Prague (including us), totally blocking Wenceslas Square, and chanting, pathetically, if in rhyming Czech (and if my translation is correct):

*Neměli tam tanky, dostali dvě branky!*  
We didn't have tanks but we got two goals!

This was, unfortunately, more or less all they had to celebrate for a generation or more. Except for more jokes:

*First Prisoner:* How long did they give you?

*Second Prisoner:* Three years.

*First Prisoner:* What for?

*Second Prisoner:* For nothing!

*First Prisoner:* Come on now, for nothing you get six years!

Considering today what I could have possibly meant when I had said, on hearing of the invasion, 'Now they've bloody well done it!', it occurs to me that what they had *done for* was not simply my faith in Communism but the cohesion of the world Communist movement and the idea of Communism as an emancipatory idea. The impact on Communism, in Britain, Western Europe and more widely is revealed in the later account of Reuben Falber (n.d.), then Assistant General Secretary of the CP.<sup>34</sup> The British party, which had a record of subordination to the Soviet Union (with cautious

and partial exceptions between 1957 and 1968) came out with a series of condemnations of the Russians and endorsements of the Czech. This was apparently brought to a conclusion at a Party Congress, by a vote of 292 to 118. Unfortunately, the ‘tankies’ did not leave but fought to recover the Party’s pro-Soviet soul. Moreover, numerous other non-governing Communist parties, including the South African, Cypriot, US and Chilean ones, endorsed the Soviet invasion. And the British CP, continuing habits built up since its foundation, still responded to embassy invitations/summons, to congress invitations (though decreasingly), and offers of free holidays. Interestingly, Falber recalls my one-time friend and colleague, Igor Biryukov, as a ‘dour’ counselor/interpreter at the increasingly stressful Soviet Embassy sessions. Falber completes his sober account with the statement, ‘whatever the sins and errors of the past – 1939, 1956 etc, in August 1968 the Communist Party of Great Britain did get it right’. To which one might respond that the worm turned too late and by too little. One problem was that by its principled stand the CP threatened to orphan itself. Moreover, a Soviet order for 10,000 copies of the *Morning Star* had been stopped, at least temporarily. Finally, there was no way the CP could rid itself of the 25-30 percent of Party activists whose loyalty was to the Soviet Union rather than anything more recognisably socialist. I was not, however, completely done with the Party. But my experiences with it when I rejoined in Birmingham, 1969, finally made me realise that the gingerbread had not only lost its gilt but also its ginger.

## **Goodbye Stalin (if not yet Lenin)**

For the six months after the invasion very little happened at the WFTU – not that this implied much reduction in the customary sloth. Having nothing else to do, I took my Nigerian materials, wrote them up, typed stencils and turned them into a 50-page report on the Nigerian Trade Union Congress (Waterman 1968). This modest document was definitely the longest piece of WFTU-based research on African unionism since the Woddis books. I handed it personally to Mark Shope in the African Department. Neither he nor anyone else in the WFTU ever responded to it. Fresh, individual and independent research – Communist-inspired though it might be – was irrelevant to WFTU’s feeble efforts, currently in a condition of suspended inanimation. However, the paper did help me to get into the master’s course at the Centre of West African Studies in Birmingham.

March 1969, at Birmingham University, I wrote a 15-page paper refuting Soviet justifications for the invasion (Waterman 1969:1):

My argument is as follows: that after 1948 a fundamentally inappropriate form of socialism was applied in Czechoslovakia. It was one that conflicted with the demands and the possibilities of an industrialised bourgeois democracy, with the actual experience of the period 1945-48, and even with the intentions declared after 1948. It is this that explains the movement that followed January 1968, the wholesale condemnation of authoritarian socialism and the confidence of the search for a new type. Moreover, as I will try to show, the possibility for different modes of socialism exists in the theory of scientific socialism (classical and contemporary) and in Communist practice.

Despite its continued confinement within the framework of Communist discourse, some rather nice references<sup>35</sup> and quotations, the piece was considered unpublishable by the CPGB, to which it was first sent.<sup>36</sup>

Tragically, it was another twenty years before Communism left Czechoslovakia. As the regime began to crumble under a new wave of street protests, a demand was circulated concerning national and international labour rights. Needless to say, it was not issued by either the state-controlled unions or by the WFTU. In form and content it reproduced the growing language of civil society, of human rights, national and international law:

### *The Right To (Go On) Strike*

The constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic does not specifically deal with the right to strike. This right is not the subject of any other law/amendment in the CSSR either. According to the fundamental/basic law, in effect/valid also here (in our country), all that is not forbidden by the law is permitted.

An international agreement concerning economic, social and cultural rights, accepted by CSSR / ... / deals with the right to strike in article 8, paragraph 1, letter d. Here it states: "Countries, the parties of this agreement, commit to ensure/provide ... the right to strike, given it is exercised in accordance with the laws of the country." / This right, therefore, is one of the rights where CSSR has not fulfilled its international-law commitments so far.

Every citizen of CSSR has, therefore, the right to go on strike, and as this right is not in any way dealt with by any law or amendment/legal regulation, it is unrestricted. /That, however, does not mean that those who are on strike should not follow applicable laws. For instance, it is not permitted to commit crimes of physical injury, destruction of others' property etc. Therefore, during the strike they cannot do what they could not do otherwise.<sup>37</sup>

But just because an institution is archaic and even irrelevant does not mean that it necessarily dies. Some years later, I wrote an epitaph for the WFTU (Waterman 2000) in which I recognised its continuing membership of the undead:<sup>38</sup>

A spectre still haunts the world of international trade unionism, the spectre of the World Federation of Trade Unions ...

- In Liverpool, 1989, a veteran dockworker leader argued with me the necessity of uniting the social-reformist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (then expanding exponentially) with the communist World Federation of Trade Unions (then declining vertiginously).
- In 1994, in the dilapidated downtown factory area of Durban, South Africa, a huge WFTU shield dominated a tiny union office. Top South African union leaders argued the anti-imperialist tradition and anti-capitalist merits of the WFTU.
- In 1997, in de-industrialised Lima, between the grey Andes and the deep blue sea, and at the last frontier of capitalist globalisation, a national trade union centre proudly – desperately – claimed its WFTU affiliation.
- At around the same time, Andy Herod (1994), an American researcher was writing one of the first-ever academic articles on the WFTU, based on an interview with its General Secretary, giving the readers the distinct impression that this was some kind of equivalent or competitor to the ICFTU, with its 124 million members.

- Even in 1999, taking part in two autonomous left international trade union events, one in South Africa, one in Mexico, I was confronted by evidence that the WFTU exists ... in a new Spanish/English magazine for the Americas called, of all things, *Utopías!*

I am more than perplexed at the longevity of an organisation that was a ghost of its former self when I worked for it over 30 years ago in 1968. In any case, after 1989 – *because* of 1989 – the WFTU was reduced to a spectre of this ghost. Its continued existence proves that there is life after death. Or that international trade union organisations can exist quite separate from any knowledge of their existence amongst the mass of workers internationally, or of any evidence of relevance or effect. Or that – unlike the network – the organisation can have an afterlife of 40-50 years?

I ended that piece with the earlier-mentioned ‘Comrades Agreement’ of 1968, by which the WFTU’s Italian affiliate agreed not to raise the matter of the Soviet invasion at the IUS Council meeting, in exchange for Soviet agreement not to demand a reversal of the Secretariat’s denunciation immediately after the invasion. And I concluded that

One should not too hastily condemn the Italian Communist trade unions for their action in 1968. Thanks to their shabby, cowardly and totally despicable behaviour, the WFTU *remains* the one international Communist front organisation that ever publicly condemned the Soviet Union. The only problem is that some who know this are dead (really dead, not just politically so). Others have forgotten it. Others remember but don’t care. And others don’t know. Which may leave only ... me? And now ... you! And any worker or unionist in the world you tell it to. Do so, because there are, as I have suggested, some unions and workers, who for romantic or fundamentalist reasons – more related to religious faith or ethnic identity than to labour, democracy and socialism – still think that the WFTU was, or is, more than a massive symbol concealing an ineffective office.

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<sup>1</sup> An imaginary inscription on the tomb of Karl Marx but also the title of a collection of anti-Communist jokes.

<sup>2</sup> For a short account of the Prague Spring, the Invasion and its consequences, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prague\\_Spring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prague_Spring). For two biographical accounts by people active in the reform movement even before this event, see Pelikán (1975: Parts 5-7) and the redoubtable Englishwoman, Rosemary Kavan (1988: Chs. 20-24). For a vivid autobiographical account by an apolitical Westerner, resident in Prague before, during and after, see Deitch (2002: Ch. 37). For a Dutch pro-Communist’s account, see Krijt (2001). Hans Krijt (Zaandam 1927) was a young working-class bloke who deserted from military service in the post-Second World War period so as to avoid having to do in Indonesia what the Nazis had done in Holland. He has lived in Czecho with his Czech family since 1948, making only occasional visits to the Netherlands. I am not sure whether it ever struck Hans that he had leapt out of the Western frying pan into the Eastern fire. I only recall Ruthie and I meeting him once whilst at the WFTU. Maybe we were at different or incompatible moments of disenchantment. Only in 2010 did I purchase a massive but discounted compilation of materials relating to the Prague Spring, the Soviet invasion and its aftermath (Navrátil 1998). Unfortunately, this is largely confined to official Party and State documents from the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia, with only a salting of those from the democratic movements within Czecho. The major points of interest in the 600 pages are, for me, the equally occasional references to Pelikán, the revelation of the Great Russian anti-semitism (called, of course, Zionism) of the Soviets (516), and the touching fact that my former ISS friend, Joy Moss-Kohoutová, and colleague, Ruth Tosek, had – after surviving some 40 years of Czechoslovak Communism – been translators of the work. For some fascinating and still shocking film material on the Soviet invasion see [http://wn.com/The\\_Prague\\_Spring\\_of\\_1968\\_Czech\\_uprising\\_against\\_the\\_Soviets](http://wn.com/The_Prague_Spring_of_1968_Czech_uprising_against_the_Soviets). The most fascinating of the several items here is a 2008 commemorative interview with a man who in 1968 was a Soviet representative on the international Communist journal, *World Marxist Review*, Vladimir Lukin.

<sup>3</sup> Unlike the IUS and its forerunners, the international trade union organisations have been extensively researched. For the WFTU,

however, such research is mostly confined to its foundation and early years. I mention here a limited selection of the relevant literature, which will inevitably lead interested readers to a more extensive list (Carew 2000, Herod 1994, MacShane 1992, Tosstorf 2001, van Goethem 2000, Waterman 2002b, 2004a, b,c). A book-length 'official history' of the WFTU was written by a one-time Indian officer of the organisation, Debkumar Ganguli (2000), who died shortly after. This account of conferences and resolutions is illustrated by photos of conferences and delegations, the latter often surrounding a head of state. The back-cover photo is here iconic, showing a crowd of WFTU leaders, including the author, paying their respects to the President of a (presumably capitalist) India, 2000. I knew of a Spanish-language history by Argentinean Communist labour historian, Rubens Iscaro (1983), but had been unable to track down a copy for my collection of what I suspect will prove to be another sample of WFTU trivia. My account here has, therefore, to draw heavily on my own past writings. *Update*: Early 2013, I accompanied Gina on a working trip to Buenos Aires. Here I finally managed to track down a library copy of the Iscaro book and was able to confirm my suspicion about its belonging to the Ganguli tradition. The only significant difference from the Ganguli book was the inclusion of the speeches of Iscaro to the WFTU conferences he attended. I made two copies of the book, donating one of them to the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

<sup>4</sup> For Marxist accounts with both a long historical view and theoretical concerns, compare Brecher (1972) and Hyman (1972). For a militant British handbook on strikes, which makes a thought-provoking contrast with the RILU one, see Montague (1979).

<sup>5</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golem>.

<sup>6</sup> I recall the less-fortunate experience of Eric, Marie and their son Kim. Eric had been a British Communist journalist before becoming a Maoist and taking up work in China, from where the couple sent back glowing letters, forwarded for my appalled consideration by our mutual friend, Jackie. On leaving China, and aware of Maoist paranoia, Eric concealed his British Maoist notes and documents behind a portrait of the Great Helmsman. This was discovered by the Chinese and the family spent two years under arrest in two hotel rooms, to be eventually released, after signing the customary untrue and humiliating confession. One can only hope that the offending materials will be eventually released from some archive. See Eric's account of their ordeal (Gordon 1972).

<sup>7</sup> Tom was a working-class Scottish Communist, educated, as I had been, at Ruskin, possibly before the Second World War. At the time of its foundation he had worked for the WFTU in Paris. He and his then wife, a French resistance activist, Anna, were friends of my family. When I got to know him, Tom was running the London office of WFTU, which produced the English edition of its monthly magazine, *World Trade Union Movement*. Many years later, after he had retired to Brighton, I begged him to produce some kind of memoir of his own WFTU experience. But I was clearly speaking to another Tom, or trying to get him to open a book he had long ago closed.

<sup>8</sup> I paraphrase the Marxist social geographer David Harvey. But this reduction of British Communism to militant trade unionism is recognised by Samuel (1985) and demonstrated by Watters (1992).

<sup>9</sup> Saillant (1910-74), was originally a furniture worker. He became active as a socialist within the French Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in the 1930s, was involved in street struggles, suffered beatings and imprisonment. As an active member of the underground movement during the Second World War, he was co-responsible for the reunification of the previously-divided CGT. He was its representative in the National Council of the Resistance, of which he became President. He also gained a seat in the Consultative Assembly that recreated the French Republic. He was General Secretary of the WFTU, 1945-69, remaining resident in France and active in the CGT when the WFTU was obliged to move to Czechoslovakia. He received a number of French state and Soviet awards. Although not, apparently, a member of the Communist Party, he remained identified with Communist unionism and Soviet Communism till the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, which he, along with the overwhelming majority of the WFTU Secretariat, temporarily condemned. His eventual retirement one year later might have been because of this first disloyal act as well as a heart condition.

<sup>10</sup> The two Africa specialists were Heinz Deutschland and Hubert Filipowsky. The kind of research they were doing – and its parameters – is suggested by Filipowsky (1972). For the nature of the FDGB see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free\\_German\\_Trade\\_Union\\_Federation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_German_Trade_Union_Federation). Heinz survived the collapse of the German Democratic Republic and worked later as a bookshop manager and a labour historian. He was also long involved with a foundation concerned to preserve the Bernau College building, apparently one whose unique qualities I had myself failed to recognise under the winter skies and long nights of 1968-9.

<sup>11</sup> The WFTU has continued its self-limiting identification with authoritarian socialist or nationalist regimes for more than forty years. Its determination to subordinate itself to the Communist states was demonstrated during its Prague Congress, 1978, in which it was under attack by its Eurocommunist affiliates. Still inhabiting a universe in which international unionism subordinated itself to conflict

between states and blocs, it in 2006 congratulated President Lukashenko of Belarus on his re-election. Lukashenko is one of the most authoritarian leaders of the post-Soviet states, and rather more pro-Soviet than the Russian Federation he would like to rejoin or even lead. The message could be found on the WFTU website, <http://www.wftucentral.org/history/>, a significantly feeble gesture of the organisation in the direction of a globalised and networked capitalism.

<sup>12</sup> Here we have to remember that the German Democratic Republic was, with the help of Bertold Brecht, a respectable contributor to the culture of the Anti-Communist Joke. After the East Berlin Uprising, 1953, Brecht's Little Man was considering the breakdown of confidence between the working class and the state. 'Would it not be possible', he wondered, 'for the government to dissolve the people and elect a new one in its place?'

<sup>13</sup> I later discovered that I was here breaking with a long-established international Communist tradition. The Soviets had negotiated the multi-volume English-language edition of the Marx-Engels collected works with the CPGB publisher, Lawrence and Wishart. Payment took place at its King Street HQ in London. This was done by a Soviet diplomat who arrived with one or more suitcases full of banknotes – presumably used, rumpled and in small denominations.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.osaarchivum.org/greenfield/repository/osa:ebd7742e-b630-4e7b-9dfc-c71898147154#1>

<sup>15</sup> This account depends upon Waterman (1973). For further treatment see Cohen (1974) and Waterman (1987).

<sup>16</sup> This eventually appeared in book form (Cohen 1974).

<sup>17</sup> The Czechoslovak emergency services were to be immortalised in Miloš Forman's black comedy, *The Firemen's Ball*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Firemen%27s\\_Ball](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Firemen%27s_Ball). My favourite scene is the one in which an aged and chair-bound victim of a fire is shivering in the snow as the firemen make desultory attempts to douse his burning home. When they become aware of his condition they pick up the chair and put him closer to this source of warmth. Obviously a parable for state socialism more generally, it was not so understood by the national fire service, or firemen, who tried to get it banned as libellous.

<sup>18</sup> Also after they left Prague, late-1968. Hanns, Choli and their kids returned to Chile where they became heavily involved with the *Unidad Popular* government of Salvador Allende, were hunted after the coup and escaped to the German Democratic Republic. Here Hanns worked in the musical academy whilst Choli again worked on the Spanish section of a state radio. Comfortably accommodated as they were, they nonetheless became increasingly critical of not only a much more rigid Communist regime than that of pre-invasion Czecho but also of the undemocratic and elitist behaviour of the Chilean CP leaders there. They returned to Chile before the fall of Pinochet, and were subjected to the persecution of a declining dictatorship. It then took Hanns a decade before he could resume his academic career in music. Choli could never recover hers as a journalist. This did not stop her from co-authoring (under her maiden name) two books (for one of these see Lomnitz and Melnick 2000) They had both dropped out of a Communist Party still living in its problematic past. When I met them briefly in 2010 Choli was retired, Hanns still working. And their daughter, Karla, who I remember mostly as a chirpy little schoolgirl called Karlita, was now, of course, a mature woman with her own kids and professional career – but just as chirpy. Hanns had read my account of Prague in the 1960s and told me how different the experience had been for him, given that for him it had been a literal homecoming. And, for both himself and Choli, it was a paradise of European classical musical. Hanns also gave me the text of a piece he had written for a conference (Stein 1989).

<sup>19</sup> This was at [http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/shope\\_m.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/shope_m.html) but I cannot now recover it.

<sup>20</sup> I lost sight of Brian after leaving Prague. I made major efforts to track him down whilst writing this autobio. Brian being more than commonly averse to the internet, I only eventually found him through his daughter, Kirsten, whose recognisably Bicat face appeared on *her* website, and after she had reverted to her maiden name. What follows is edited by me from Brian's eventual, and colourful, email account:

The family had resettled in Bradford after their sojourn in Prague. Brian had a Research Fellowship at Leeds University. He later accepted the offer of a lectureship in the English Department of Rostock in the then GDR where he first discovered he had a talent for theatre as director/producer. After a three-year stint in Rostock he returned to Bradford. There, he got involved with Theatre in the Mill at Bradford University and the Bradford Playhouse (founded by J.B. Priestley), directing plays and serving additionally in various positions: Studio Director and Educational Director, member of Artistic Committee and where he founded Jazz At The Playhouse in 2001. Since these were unpaid, he kept body and soul together by supply teaching variously at Bradford University (extra-mural), Leeds Polytechnic, and at a Leeds Comprehensive. In 1989-90 he was Foreign Studies Adviser to students at Brown University, Rhode Island, USA. He remained in the shrinking ranks of the CPGB in the years following the Soviet intervention in CSSR, until the futility of this became too much. Inger and Brian are now long divorced, Brian eventually remarrying in 2004.

21 Confirmation of his failure to meet up with British Communists working in Prague can be found in a lengthy interview with him (Russell 2011). Sam Russell, who had impeccable credentials in the East End Jewish working class and in abandoning university studies for the International Brigade, was a longtime foreign correspondent for the *Daily Worker*. We younger Communists used to joke about the standard Sam Russell foreign report in which the message was identical with only names of places and politicians changed. The interview is revealing, especially where he talks about his work in the Communist states, as well as the often cavalier attitude of the paper's editor to reports of his that were not on the line. Given that he remained a loyal staff member of the paper and of the Party, perhaps the most revealing point at which he refers – in relation to just one case – to his combination of naivety and cynicism.

22 We lost touch with Ibrahim and Marita after we left Prague. I rediscovered them by searching Google for 'marita finland iraq' around 2005. By this time they had finally left Iraq and returned to Helsinki. Marita had had a longish interview with an English-language newspaper in Finland (Nousiainen 2004). I finally met up with them again when visiting Helsinki for the first time, 2008. It was a very gratifying reunion, especially bearing in mind the few other survivors of Prague 1968 I have been able to track down.

23 For a short account of the Prague Spring, the Invasion and its consequences, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prague\\_Spring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prague_Spring).

24 Some web sources suggest this was about America and Vietnam. But the title inevitably associates it with the Ogre stalking Wenceslas Square that month. Christopher Hitchens (2008), who led me to it, has no doubts about the matter. I, personally, have no objection to its being applied to the US as well as Russia. Then or now.

25 Because of its unlikely name, I only recently discovered the account of Alan Levy (1980). Even its original title, *Rowboat to Prague*, 1972, was only marginally more suggestive than its 1980 one. Levy was an American journalist who arrived just before the Prague Spring and was expelled during the Soviet Winter. Living close to the Castle, on the side of the airport, from whence the first Soviet troops came, he saw much more violence than we did. Knowing or meeting numerous significant actors, he gives a detailed and well-documented account of the Soviet occupation and dismantling of the Prague Spring. A movie of Milan Kundera's novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, appeared about 20 years later, just before the collapse of Communism in Czechoslovakia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Unbearable\\_Lightness\\_of\\_Being](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Unbearable_Lightness_of_Being). Both novel and film have always puzzled me since I have always felt that life is both weighty and light. The most impressive part of the movie was the reconstruction of the Soviet invasion of Prague, using original documentary material as well as – I seem to recall – some high-tech montage. Particularly effecting is the scene in which Tereza gives her camera film to a Dutch tourist to take out and publish. I had myself had the role of the Dutch tourist, one day after the invasion. My film included a photo of a smouldering tank. I passed the undeveloped roll to Monty Johnston who published several of them in a British Communist Party publication. However, the overall impression presented by director Philip Kaufman, was one more appropriate to Budapest, 1956, than Prague, 1968. The bloodshed was, in Prague, limited, though vicious enough (see Levy here). And the repression was carried out over years by Czechs rather than immediately by Russians. Although the film was impressive for one made in a location other than Prague, it might have been even more so if it had been made a year or two later in Prague itself – and by Miloš Forman.

26 Indeed, there is even a suggestion in the novel that the triffids had been invented by Soviet pseudo-scientist, Lysenko. What in 1951 was a Western Cold War fantasy became for us an Eastern Cold War reality. The triffids, incidentally, were three-legged creatures or machines. I don't recall whether, like other such sci-fic aliens, they eventually succumbed to some banal earthly disease. But the Soviet triffids eventually, of course, did. The disease was the capitalist market – and liberal democracy (or a brutal neo-liberal equivalent of both).

27 At the same time internationalism was being reinvented, practically if not theoretically, by student rebellion in Western Europe. This is how it was experienced by a budding socialist-feminist in the UK:

Our internationalism was implicit and simply taken for granted. It did not occur to us to justify or explain why we were connected to [Martin Luther] King or to [Rudi] Dutschke. These assumed attitudes of an era are often most puzzling to people subsequently. One influence on us had been CND, which had always included peace protesters from other countries. There had also been the anti-colonial movements and the connection to southern Africa. Then came the war in Vietnam, along with opposition to the regime of the right-wing Greek Colonels .... This internationalism was much more than an abstract political idea, because the students who came [to the UK] brought information and radical ideas from their own milieux. Friendship and love affairs made the connections to other countries' predicaments all the closer. International relations were thus personal as well as political. (Rowbotham, 2000:172)

28 These are extracts from a typed diary covering Tuesday August 21-Sunday August 25, with a gap on Thursday 23. The original diary amounts to around seven single-spaced pages.

<sup>29</sup> Where he was eventually to be found, as earlier suggested, was Rome, where he settled, was naturalised, was active in both exile and Italian left politics. The fullest account of this later life, till his death, aged 75, in 1999 is Caccamo (2007).

<sup>30</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franti%C5%A1ek\\_Kriegel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franti%C5%A1ek_Kriegel).

<sup>31</sup> For these terms from the Soviet vocabulary, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rootless\\_cosmopolitan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rootless_cosmopolitan), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourgeois\\_nationalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourgeois_nationalism).

<sup>32</sup> Much later the words of Milan Kundera (1984: 13) helped me understand both the Prague Spring in general and this courageous act of the Czech Communist leaders in particular:

I want to stress above all else this obvious fact: the Prague Spring was not a sudden revolutionary explosion ending the dark years of Stalinism. Its way had been paved by a long and intense process of liberalisation developing through the 1960s. It's possible it all began even earlier, perhaps as early as 1956 or even 1948 – from the birth of the Stalinist regime in Czechoslovakia, out of the critical spirit which deconstructed the regime's dogma little by little, pitting Marx against Marxism, common sense against ideological intoxication, humanist sophism against inhuman sophistry, and which, by dint of laughing at the system, brought the system to be ashamed of itself: a critical spirit supported by a crushing majority of the people, slowly and irremediably making power aware of its guilt, less and less able to believe in itself or in its legitimacy.

<sup>33</sup> Hana went on to sign Charta 77, the founding document of the democratic movement in Czechoslovakia, as also to publish or co-publish work on Communist history (Hajek and Mejdrová 1997).

<sup>34</sup> All of this must have been particularly galling for Falber, insofar as he had for many years been the CPGB middleman for the Moscow Gold the Party had always denied receiving: and which we party members – never seeing any sign of it – used to joke about. In 1991 Falber publicly admitted that between 1958 and 1979 (i.e. 10 years *after* the conflict over the invasion) he was handling some £100,000 per annum from the Russians (the *Guardian* 1991, Mosbacher 1996). This puts another gloss on the Party having 'got it right' in 1968. Further accounts suggest collusion by the British MI5 with the Moscow Gold, since the continued existence of the CPGB was a useful stick with which they could beat the rest of the British left. The matter then either rises, or descends, into the realms of the espionage novel. Jimmy Reid, who I recall as a genial General Secretary of the YCL in the 1950s-60s, reports

I once thought talk of Moscow gold was a lie peddled by the right-wing press in Britain. Alas, it was true in every sordid detail.

It persisted well into the latter half of the twentieth century. The delivery was always on Hampstead Heath. At an appointed place, the deputy general secretary of the British Communist Party, a man called Reuben Falber, would wait. A car would draw up to the kerb. A window facing the kerb would be lowered, the KGB man inside would hand out a parcel containing cash in British currency. Only three people knew of this: these were Falber, the general secretary of the CP, John Gollan, and someone from the *Morning Star* newspaper. (Reid 2001).

There is no necessary retribution for the devious, at least on earth. Falber survived, dying in 2006 at the grand old age of 92.

<sup>35</sup> One of these was to the scholarly liberal history of the Czechoslovak CP by Taborsky (1961). This was a book I had bought in London, at considerable expense, especially for my second trip to Czechoslovakia. It was widely circulated amongst the comrades there.

<sup>36</sup> One or two letters or articles by those of us resident in Prague were published in various CPGB publications at this time. Monty Johnstone, on return to the UK, would have been the most successful. I now find a forgotten piece of my own on the Prague Spring, published in the YCL magazine, before the invasion (Waterman 1968). But the CP was torn in half between the 'tankies', who would have cheered the Soviet Liberation of, well, Liverpool, and the 'revisionists', who wanted to both eat their cake (reform Communism) and still have it (the Big Soviet Brother).

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.joewein.de/praha89.html>.

<sup>38</sup> 'Undead is a collective name for beings that the superstitious believe are deceased yet behave as if alive. Undead may be spiritual, such as ghosts, or corporeal, such as vampires and zombies.' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Undead>). The WFTU continued to be undead. In 2011 I felt obliged to put another nail in its .... umm? .... uncoffin? (Waterman 2011d).

## **Seeking the New Internationalisms**



**The author, aged 65, at an international labour history conference, Belgium, 2001**

## CHAPTER 5

# Birmingham-Zaria, 1969-72: Social(ist) Theory and African Reality

## Birmingham, 1969-70: Becoming an Africanist

After Prague and the WFTU, Birmingham and the Centre of West African Studies (CWAS) were paradise. Birmingham itself was anything but such. It had been devastated by industrialisation, the surrounding urban sprawl being called, for good reason, the Black Country. In the heart of Britain's industrial development, it had been a major target of Nazi bombing. And then it had been targeted by the urban planners, who had built round the occasionally impressive Victorian core a tight and impassable inner ring road which forced pedestrians over footbridges and through tunnels to reach the Bull Ring market or get to the railway station. But we got lucky again with housing. During a three-day visit, the university's accommodation bureau had found us a large Victorian groundfloor flat, with extensive garden, in suburban Harborne. Harborne still retained something of its village character, despite the multi-storey housing estate across the road from our place. Moreover, it was just a 10-minute bicycle run downhill to the CWAS. We sublet a room and later cleared out an outhouse that Ruthie could use as a registered nursery.

The housing estate and Danny's school were our connections to working-class Birmingham. And whilst Brumagem is one of the less-prestigious regional accents in Britain, the women in the estate grocery store were much more open-hearted than those we were familiar with from more southerly parts. My other working-class connection was with the CP office in Birmingham, then being run by the working-class Scot, Frank Watters. I rejoined the CP there – to my later shame signing up Ruthie without asking her first. Frank was a proletarian activist. And the University Communists, such as they were, were divided into Maoists, such democratic Communists as ourselves, and various others, thoroughly disorientated by 1968 in its various emanations. Frank may not have been a 'tankie' (a Communist identified with the Soviet invasion), but his focus was entirely on the British Party as an institution, and on trade unionism and worker struggle. He certainly had no interest in anything that we might have to say on either Prague or the WFTU. He symbolised for me the Communism of an era that had died in Prague. If there was one person who convinced me that I had to leave the Party I had been born into, I am afraid it was Frank.<sup>1</sup>

My Master's course was the first and only part of my tertiary education that I unreservedly enjoyed. I was able to put into it all my Prague reading about Africa, and an intellect freeing itself from Communism. Founding Director of CWAS was the arch but well-published Africanist historian, John Fage. Margaret Piel, a humourless and empiricist American sociologist, was also a practising Catholic. I feared she would mark me down on my 'opiate of the masses' religion paper but she didn't. Peg Piel rather pooh-poohed my interest in trade unions, considering these marginal to West African urban experience (not entirely without reason). Arnold Hughes, the young political scientist, was wearing 1960s long hair and flowery ties, which seemed to me in some tension with his conventional attitudes and limited capacities. Wrong again, of course, since flower-power fashions had already

become mainstream fashion. And then there was my new friend, Robin Cohen, the laid-back non-party Socialist, living nearby with his wife Selina and baby. Robin had a fellowship he was using to complete his PhD on Nigerian unions and politics. The eight or ten students were mostly young, congenial but seemed not highly motivated. Or not as motivated as I, given that I had put the family savings and future into this course.

The CWAS occupied a big 1930s suburban house on the edge of the university. We could opt between four to five courses, each implying a lecture and a seminar per week, the rest of the time being available for reading, writing and staff seminars. I did history, sociology and politics, and followed economics – later regretting that I had not sat the exam in this optional extra. For each of the three subjects we were required to do around three papers during the nine months of course work. Of the nine term papers I wrote at CWAS, eight were eventually published – giving me a certainly exaggerated sense of my own capacities (for those recorded, see Waterman 1970b-c, 1971a-e). As luck would have it, my course coincided with a wave of radicalism in African studies and publishing, with several of my papers landing up in the Paris-based bilingual political journal, *Présence Africain*. I also wrote reviews and review articles. My journalistic training and typewriter enabled me to read and write fast, to a required length. Insofar as the CP, both nationally and locally, was either indifferent or hostile to my own understanding of what had happened in Prague, my earlier-mentioned piece on this (Chapter 4) was published in a left Indian student magazine at Birmingham University, *Bharat* (Waterman 1970a). One of my term papers landed up in a journal almost a generation later, and in Spanish (Waterman 1987)! Another appeared under the pseudonym of Peter Feuermann (1970) in the theoretical journal of the South African Communist Party, *African Communist*. I seem to recall it was the same item as I later published in Nigeria (Waterman 1971a). It was a review of Marxist analyses of Nkrumah's Ghana, after it collapsed, and the editor of the journal dissociated the SACP from my critique of Communist attitudes toward a regime which had been unconditionally supported by the international Communist movement).

The nine months of course work were running rapidly down. I began again with applications. I applied, for the last time, to the Party. The *Morning Star* (ex-*Daily Worker*) offered me a job as its Midlands correspondent, at about half the going average wage in the UK, explaining that I would have to make up the rest as a freelance or in other ways.<sup>2</sup> Another job I applied for was with the *Tanganyika Standard*, the more-or-less official newspaper of the radical-nationalist Nyerere regime. I was interviewed in London by its editor, Frene Ginwala, a formidable South African Communist – presumably appointed less for her Communism than for her leading role in the African National Congress. I have no idea why I was turned down. Maybe she had checked my political credentials with Mark Shope. But this piece of bad luck turned out to be good fortune. A few months later, Nyerere sacked Frene and other foreign staff on the spot after she had condemned a Sudanese military coup that had massacred the leadership of the Sudanese CP. Nyerere evidently was not amused by this intervention into Tanzania's international relations.

Then, to the joint excitement of Ruthie and myself, I got offered a job teaching history at the Northern Nigerian university, Ahmadu Bello, in Zaria – 1,000 km north of Lagos. Insofar as I was to be employed under some British state arrangement, serving what would later be called 'Development Cooperation', the wages, housing and conditions were OK. We even got a loan or subsidy to buy a car, opting for a secondhand Land Rover. We got, moreover, reassurance from our eccentric new friend, Belle Harris, a Jewish East-End, a Ruskin College graduate, and someone who had previously taught in Tanganyika/Tanzania. Belle was going to teach Public Administration. Another friend, Chris Allen,

a Communist friend from Oxford days, had also been contracted and was to be bringing his young wife, Frances.<sup>3</sup> The major concern I had – apart from all the practical ones of again moving house and storing furniture – was that my academic knowledge of West Africa was limited to nine months, that of African history three months, and that my only academic qualification so far was my Oxford BA. I had not yet completed the requirements for my MSocSci. This delay was due to a clause in the exam rules making *unnecessary* the completion of a thesis within the three months following course work. As a result of this negative clause, I didn't complete my degree requirements for another year or so. Several of my fellow students never did.

We stored and packed. We said goodbye again to our UK family. We took tickets via Amsterdam and Rome, stopping off in both. This was, in retrospect, a bad idea since we were imposing this also on Danny, then about nine and Tamara, about seven. But Ruthie had wanted to say farewell to her sister Annie in Amsterdam. And I had got a promise of free accommodation from the Italian Communist union confederation, the CGIL. We wanted the kids to see the wonders of both ancient Rome and the CGIL school, which was on the edge of an extinct volcano, down the Via Appia. What most impressed the kids, however, reducing them to tears, were the stray and starving cats, fed by passers-by, opposite that pride of Roman civilisation, the Coliseum. Unfamiliar with the prickly pear fruit, I passed Danny an unpeeled one, which we were picking out of his hands and face for the next several days. At Rome Airport we were appalled to discover that I had failed to pick up one of our thirteen pieces of luggage from the Amsterdam-Rome flight, which I had to run and recover. We then had to anyway wait six hours for our plane to take off.

Farewell, Europe, Communist Internationalism – and being an apparatchik. Hello, Africa, solidarity with the Third World – and to academia.

## **Zaria, 1970-72: Negotiating boundaries**

Because of the flight delay we arrived at Kano airport in the middle of the night. Here I was obliged to pay my first bribe in Africa.<sup>4</sup> I could not find our inoculation document and the medical officer then showed us the instruments of torture. These consisted of a hot-looking cold-box, in which were lying some dubious-looking injection needles. The temperature, even at night, was high and heavy. The children were exhausted and appalled at the sight of the needles. A British fiver settled the matter, with the officer insisting that I turn up later with the mislaid papers (much, much later they fell out of some book I had put them in three cities earlier). We were welcomed by one of my future colleagues, a former Ruskin College graduate, a mild ex-colonial boy and not too bright. The good news was that I was to be teaching not African history ... but something called World Contemporary History. The bad news was that this was not in the History Department, with Chris, but in a School of Basic Studies, which was intended to increase the number of Northerners qualified for university entrance. The worse news was that we would have to spend the night in a cheapo hotel without water, air-conditioning or mosquito nets.

The road from Kano to Zaria ran through the dry savanna. The vegetation was covered with dusty red and seemed to consist of thorny bushes and sparse grass. Yet the countryside was populated, stalls sold local fruit, and long-horned cattle were somehow gaining nourishment, herded by Fulani herders, wearing nothing but hide sandals, a smock and a broad-brimmed hat. The road skirted Zaria, with its suburban bungalows and shacks. We passed massive naked rocks. The campus appeared like a luxury

passenger ship, surrounded by the misty savanna. The university was entirely new, with ultra-modern buildings, a big library, utilitarian dormitories for the students, and then with spacious bungalows for staff, these being so far spread that they really required transport to reach. There was also a Staff Club with a swimming pool. Although, obviously, there was no colour bar here, the African academic staff were barely present.

We were first driven to temporary accommodation on the University Campus – a bungalow empty due to its usual inhabitants being on leave in the USA. It was well-equipped, already supplied with a ‘boy’. This was Yakubu, a big, friendly Christian Hausa. From my earlier Nigerian experience I knew that even middle-class Nigerians had servants. But it was the first time, of course, that we had had one. I was reminded of the TV programme in which a local psychologist was being asked about the British working-class immigrants arriving in Ian Smith’s Rhodesia. ‘Isn’t there some kind of culture shock when these people suddenly find they can have a black servant?’ ‘Oh, yes, indeed!’ ‘And how long does this last?’ ‘Oh, about 48 hours’. The bungalow was fully equipped. The kitchen was Tupperware heaven. Above the bed there hung a truly awful painting (meaning one that was meant to fill believers with awe): ‘Christ over the City’. It showed Jesus floating, well, Christlike, over – of all the world’s cities – Manhattan. This was the first hint that we had arrived in some Anglo-American Colonial Missionary Tupperware Reserve. The second was provided when we were picked up by this very nice English middle-class lady. She was the wife of a doctor at the University Clinic, and she was to be a colleague of mine at the SBS. She had kindly invited us to lunch, with her two little girls, so as to answer our myriad questions and soothe our multiple anxieties. Ruthie remarked on the delicious food, to which Danny brightly added, ‘Much better than the shit they gave us at school in Birmingham’. There then occurred a Whole Series of Miracles: 1) the two little girls had apparently never heard the word and did not turn a neatly-combed hair; 2) I came up with the instant, if strangled, riposte, ‘Danny, we don’t use here the language you picked up at school’; and 3) Danny did not brightly respond, ‘But I picked it up from you, Dad!’.

One or two days later I met up with the Head of the History Department, Bob Gavin, who was that rare (to me) bird, a Scottish Catholic. Bob was only one of the various expat academics and, whilst having no particular leftist inclinations, was both serious in his work and devoted to his students. When I asked Bob about the course I was to teach, he gave me a slim Penguin on contemporary history by someone I had never heard of, Geoffrey Barraclough (1967). This turned out to be a surprisingly critical view of the matter, the author’s disposition reminding me of that grand old man of British radical history and international relations, E.H. Carr. What other resources were there? Well, said Bob, that’s really up to you. There’s a library at the SBS, there are typewriters and there’s a duplicator.

I had a couple of weeks to literally acclimatise myself, familiarise myself and to prepare a course new both to me and to ABU. This I structured as a history of three contemporary worlds, West, East and South. I thought this would be a great way to take a Marxist position – criticism of all that exists – whilst covering my arse against charges of ... well ... taking a Marxist position. The SBS library had some useful resources, despite the origin of much of the material in the United States Information Service office in Kaduna. This was, after all, two years after 1968, and radical 1960s scholarship had impacted even on the establishment in the USA. I had brought with me my adult-education methodology book and my teaching experience from Prague (and Lagos), a little lefty book on the three worlds of democracy by the Canadian Marxist political philosopher, C.B. Macpherson (1998). And then there were the books and journals in the university library itself.

The students, when they turned up, were almost all boys, mostly Muslim, mostly Hausa (name of both the dominant ethnic group and the *lingua franca* of Northern Nigeria). Some of them, often sons of Muslim clerics, the *Ulamaa*, were already radicalised, walking the campus with the slim blue Penguin of Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon 1970) under their arms. The Christians were more inclined to think that all knowledge came from the West. When I asked my first class what teaching methods they were accustomed to I was shaken out of my tiny little European mind by the common reply: 'The master writes it on the blackboard and we copy it into our books'. Most of school education in Nigeria – including the rote learning – was marked by both Colonial and Church traditions, these themselves reflecting a Victorian rather than an Elizabethan (the Second) one.

## Living in (or off) Nigeria

Having already read Gunder Frank, I had no illusions about 'development', and less about 'development aid' (which was to be the framework within which I was employed for the rest of my working life!). Given that I was employed by the British state, the main question in my mind was how far this Nigerian experience might develop *me*. The same notion was clearly in the mind of a new friend, Paul Lubeck, who told me that he was actually dependent on a grant from the Ford Foundation – then considered by most of us as Satan's Rasputin.<sup>5</sup> Seeing my shocked or at least startled response, Paul said, 'I am the internal contradiction within the Ford Foundation'. Well, OK for Paul, who was living with his partner, Debbie, within a traditional mud-built house, in a popular quarter of Kano, Tudun Wada. Paul was anyway learning Hausa, interviewing first-generation factory workers, and aware of the centrality of Islam to the community. We were eventually living in a two-storey house, with an African cook, on this luxury liner, where the official language was imperial English. We had access to meat from the Veterinary Department, to the University Clinic, a fridge, running water (or running-on-and-off water), the Club and its swimming pool, a secondhand Land Rover, four Polish bicycles, etc.<sup>6</sup>

We were not, however, quite as isolated as our nearest neighbours, a Colombian doctor involved in some UN project, his beautiful wife, their lovely lively kids, and their trusty Colombian maid. This family remained cocooned within the campus, venturing out to the suburbs of Zaria only to go to the not-so-supermarket. But Ruthie, who had travelled widely on her own and had lived abroad, was not only fascinated by Nigeria but both willing and able to squat in the dust and bargain with the traders. Moreover, Ruthie immediately got a teaching job within the University primary school. On the first day of the new school year, Ruthie read out a list of names from the class register: 'John?', 'Michael?', 'Mary?', 'Elizabeth?'. There came no response from the wide-eyed Nigerian five- and six-year-olds. They actually had names like Amina, Mohamed, Issa, Ayo and Olu. For the first time I realised the meaning of a *Christian* name. The parents actually thought they needed these English biblical names to go to school. Ruthie, Montessori trained, had a challenging time negotiating with authoritarian attitudes to schooling – both Nigerian and Colonial. Our own kids were surrounded by Nigerian kids at school and play. And then even when they were playing with the Colombian kids, they would be speaking to each other in sing-song Nigerian English.

Before we could travel even around the campus, we had to get those bicycles. This involved my taking a collective taxi five or ten kilometres to some sheds beside the non-functioning railway station in Zaria, where bright Polish cycles were being assembled. Having negotiated for four, I then

discovered that assembly did not include tightening the spokes, which jangled loosely between the hubs and the rims. Bearing in mind the symbiotic relationship between the two enterprises involved, I assumed the division of labour was a way of spreading the income a little further, probably involving an element of kick-back.

But then there was the somewhat more arduous journey required for claiming our secondhand Land Rover from Lagos, 1,000 km South, across two or three ecological zones, the River Niger, and through the chaos of Lagos to the docks. And then, of course, driving it back north again. We were short of cash so I hitched down. This was achieved in about two days, with welcome stops in a couple of (ex-Colonial) Government Rest Houses in Bida and Illorin. Having recovered the vehicle, in perfect condition, I even managed to get the necessary papers, drive it to the Land Rover dealer, and wait with my heart in my throat whilst the workers there cut big ugly gashes in the aluminium sides of the vehicle and then fitted, perfectly, a couple of windows. I also, of course, stopped off at the NLC headquarters, met my old friends from 3-4 years earlier and got a visit to the site where the new party headquarters was already in skeleton form. Going back north was more than somewhat hair-raising, since I was now myself responsible for avoiding the trucks and buses that came hurtling over the middle of the many narrow bridges, these being decorated on both side with the corpses of vehicles that had not made it. Many road sections were unmade, and there were Land Rover-sized holes even in the tarred ones. The Niger was surprisingly narrow 1,000 km from its delta as I rattled over the disused road/railway bridge. I had started from Lagos at five a.m., and should have stopped in Kaduna, since it had got dark again, headlights (if working) were often targeted on one's face, and exhaustion had long set in. But there was the beautiful four-lane motorway from Kaduna to Zaria (actually responsible for much speeding, or driver boredom, and therefore the customary number of wrecks). I got back at nine p.m.

Once equipped with wheels, we were able to go not only to the market of Samaru, on the other side of the main road, but to Zaria itself, with its dusty main street, its single supermarket, its amazing market (where we bargained for an extra petrol tank) and the old city itself.

## **Toters of bibles and smokers of grass**

There seemed to be, in Zaria, two lots of expatriates: those who were smoking seriously potent Nigerian hash and who thought it was herbal tobacco. I have already said something about the second group, the toters of bibles, who were in Nigeria, inspired by the civilising mission descended from David Livingstone, Rudyard Kipling and various Church Missionary Societies, armed with the Holy Bible and Tupperware, immune to poisoned arrows. Let me again quote Kipling (1899):

Take up the White Man's burden--  
Send forth the best ye breed--  
Go, bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait, in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild--  
Your new-caught sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.

We had many of these sons, and daughters (usually wives of the sons) at ABU. Most were friendly and effective teachers. There were enough of these in the School of Basic Studies. They later demonstrated their liberalism and good sense when I argued that we should not ban students caught smoking grass. One other senior staff member was venal, or at least devious. This was James O’Connell, the Professor of Politics and a plain-clothes Jesuit priest. Maybe he was *not* the one who later denounced me to the Vice Chancellor, but – insofar as one could get a straight position out of him – his was certainly a continuation of the westernising, modernising, proselytising tradition.<sup>7</sup> Then there was one of our neighbours, a very white teacher of mathematics, who still wore the knee-length, wide open, imperial shorts, up which could be seen the colonial privates (referred to by the inventive English as ‘meat and two veg’). There is no doubt that these shorts (or longs) were designed by an equally imperial doctor, or school of medicine, precisely to allow the circulation of fresh air around the vital organs of colonial reproduction. One could have laughed this off, or dismissed him, had he not invited us to dinner. As far as I recall, this consisted of meat and two veg, though not, fortunately, his. The meat was borne in by one of the lesser breeds without the union, who stood with a charger of beef balanced on one hand whilst the professor awkwardly sliced bits off. It would have been easier for him to have the servant put the dish down on the table. But this would hardly have humiliated the man sufficiently.

There was also a Zaria Club somewhere, a place we never visited but which we understood to be even whiter than the Staff Club on campus. And then there was the little duplicated handbook for foreign families, issued from this club or a related institution, which warned newcomers against leaving children in the care of male domestics, with the clear implication that these (unlike white elder brothers, uncles or trusted family friends in the UK) might sexually molest them. This was not a worry we shared, since the worst crime committed by one of our three successive servants, Tanko, was wearing my Marks and Spencer teeshirts. As one of my feeble attempts to distance myself from the establishment, I wrote a letter to the Kaduna-based *New Nigerian*, quoting from the handbook and denouncing it. I heard that this had not gone down well in the Zaria Club.

But, then, this was 1970, high tide of student protest and university radicalism in the West (which has here to include Senegal and Mexico alongside North America and Western Europe). So there were all these staff, from Western Europe and North America, mostly in their twenties rather than thirties, and clearly less inspired by Rudyard Kipling than by Marx, Lenin, Mao, Fanon – and even by Feminism. They brought with them the anti-imperialist spirit of Ernest Crosby (1899), who brilliantly and prophetically parodied Kipling:

Take up the White Man’s burden;  
Send forth your sturdy sons,  
And load them down with whisky  
And Testaments and guns.  
Throw in a few diseases  
To spread in tropic climes,  
For there the healthy niggers  
Are quite behind the times.  
[...]  
They need our labour question, too,  
And politics and fraud,  
We’ve made a pretty mess at home;

Let's make a mess abroad.  
[...]  
Take up the White Man's burden,  
And if you write in verse,  
Flatter your Nation's vices  
And strive to make them worse.  
Then learn that if with pious words  
You ornament each phrase,  
In a world of canting hypocrites  
This kind of business pays.

So, from North America came these young guys with cowboy hats and boots, droopy moustaches, anti- or at least post-imperial attitudes, and – soon after arrival – with handfuls of cheap local marijuana. The Brits tended to be more Marxist and more square. As were Ruthie and I, isolated in Prague whilst the youth were dropping out (also of the traditional left) and plugging in (to a cosmopolitan Western youth culture). We were, however, ready to learn.

The young Canadian historian of one Nigerian ethnic group, Mike Mason, was ready to teach. As was Paul Lubeck, the American sociology PhD student, way before his time insofar as he was studying Islamic forms of protest amongst workers in the old trading and religious centre of Kano. Mike's role at parties was to keep up a stream of hilarious banter, to which I willingly played the straight man. The next day Mike would complain that whilst we were rolling around laughing at him he had been hard at work performing. Paul's role was to pronounce to the public present, 'the old left drinks alcohol, the new left smokes grass', whilst I, a non-smoker, tried desperately to inhale. Finally, I got the message, and then drove us home across the campus: the road in front got longer and longer. Ruthie also got the message, but a bad one, so that I had to hold her hand for three hours whilst it passed through her system. One evening, alone at home, I projected onto a blank wall the Beatles' film, 'Yellow Submarine'. Insofar as I had not seen the film, only some colour photos in a magazine, I considered this something of a creative achievement. Finally, I was making my tortuous way from the old left to the new.

There was here also, of course, the more serious white left – or the white left in more serious mood. I have mentioned Chris Allen and Belle Harris. Chris was in the History Department, Belle at another campus in town, teaching administration – as democratically and radically as she knew how. Chris later became a staff member at African Studies, Edinburgh, and a founding editor of the excellent *Review of African Political Economy*. (I was already working on a bibliography and compilation of radical African studies and had proposed to him and others a journal with a similar purpose. But Chris and his comrades evidently considered me too light weight). Chris, like me, was a bibliographoholic and continued for some twenty or more years the work he had begun in Zaria. Yusufu Bala Usman was one of the few radical Nigerian staff, a tall, striking and brilliant Hausa with roots in the Northern Islamic intelligentsia, who had not too much time for us white lefties. He became, however, before his early death in 2005, a major Nigerian historian and occasional radical politician (Abba 2005, Occuli 2005). Then there was Patrick Wilmot, a West Indian, in Sociology, who appeared to have, equally, a high opinion of himself and a low one of us. Patrick remained at ABU for eighteen years before being expelled for his criticism of the regime. He also became a novelist (Wilmot 2005). In Economics there was the American political-economist John Weeks and his then partner, Dorothy Remy. John had the right (i.e. left) droopy moustache. More importantly, as far as Danny was concerned, he had a serious

telescope. Dorothy was doing an anthropology PhD on women textile workers in the one factory in Zaria.<sup>8</sup> I was later impressed by the size – actually the *lack* of size – of her excellent study, wishing I had the confidence to do a 100-page PhD thesis myself. Most, if not all, of these people made academic careers later in North America or the UK, most of them also remaining on the left. None of us, I now realise, was working on *democracy*. ‘Civil society’ had not then been invented – or (re)discovered – and none of us considered the political form of a more-democratic, non- or post-capitalist Nigeria as particularly interesting or problematic.

## **The Star Society and the Star Chamber**

1970-72 was something of a honeymoon period on this northern Nigerian campus. This may have been because the war against Biafra (an Ibo elite project to create a little Nigeria which would include the oil-rich, non-Ibo, delta of the Niger) was still continuing. Later, one of our colleagues, the Fanonologist Paul Beckett, was himself to be victim of a nativist uprising in ABU, which fixed on him as a (somewhat inappropriate) symbol of US imperialism. But during our time, student protest hardly went further than complaint about the appalling hostel accommodation, designed with no thought to the 40-plus heat in the dry season.

Building some kind of relationship with the students, across the barriers of race, class, nationality, mother tongue and the teacher-student divide, was something of a challenge. My project was the Star Society, with this standing for either ‘Social Theory and African Reality’ or ‘Socialist Theory and African Revolution’, depending on circumstance and audience. The dozen or so interested students from the School of Basic Studies and elsewhere had never been on – never mind organised – a demonstration. They had never produced a leaflet, far less printed it on a duplicator. They turned up late for appointments at our house, full of Fanonist attitude but with no idea of how to express or project it. We did, however, manage to organise a series of seminars.

At this point Yusufu Usman got interested enough to use our project for a seminar on Southern Africa, to be addressed by our (Northern but, significantly, Christian) Vice-Chancellor. This man recounted his recent visit, as an external examiner or consultant, to the University of Botswana, Swaziland, or some other dependency of Apartheid South Africa. Due to the necessity of staying over for a day or two for a plane connection, he had been hosted by white colleagues in Johannesburg. In the house of his host he had seen how frightened the black servant was at the sight of an African at the table. He had also seen the Apartheid regime’s formidable army bases. The inevitable conclusion was the necessity of a dialogue between independent Africa and the Apartheid regime if anything was to be done for the black majority within South Africa.

First on his feet in question time was Yusufu. Did the Vice-Chancellor not realise that he had been set up and manipulated by his South African hosts precisely in order to demonstrate to him white power and black fear? Did he not realise that in proposing dialogue he was acting as an instrument of the Apartheid regime? No, the VC had evidently realised no such thing. Or, rather, he was only just now realising it. Neither had we in the audience considered that the VC was anything more than a weak-kneed and gullible academic. Nor, until much later, did it occur to me that Yusufu must have had information through some radical Muslim or Hausa network within the Nigerian Government, and have set up this confrontation to not only expose but publicly humiliate the Northern Christian Vice-Chancellor. We were ecstatic, not even considering that since he had not informed us of his intention,

we might also have been somewhat used by Yusufu ....

The 'Star Society' never reached these heights again. Though, some years after I left, it did actually produce one of those wall calendars common to Nigerian clubs, unions and other associations, with my photo, as founder, placed between those of Che and Ho Chi Minh. Bearing in mind the other more dubious revolutionaries on this calendar, I was both flattered and relieved.

The 'Star Chamber' turned out to be a Paper Tiger. For the second time in my employment career, I had been denounced to my boss by one of my colleagues. I was instructed to report to one of the leading academics-cum-administrators, at Belle's Institute of Public Administration, on the edge of Zaria city itself. I have to assume that I had been shopped either by James O'Connell or someone else from the Anglo-Afro-Western-Christian mafia at the university. I turned up, neatly attired and with a rapidly-beating heart. I was politely asked by my Muslim Hausa interrogator what I was teaching at the SBS. I provided him with a syllabus, a reading list and texts. I told him what I have suggested above, that I was teaching a critical and comparative approach to the three worlds of development, West, East and South, in the twentieth century. Thank you, he said, and showed me out.

## **Nigerian Unions and the Travelling Labour Seminar**

For more than one year in Zaria I was haunted by my uncompleted master's thesis. This was intended to be built upon my report on the NTUC, written at the WFTU in 1968, taking advantage of my academic courses and additional empirical research in Nigeria. Unfortunately, I was in the North and, moreover, in a part which had little history or contemporary experience of labour protest or unionisation. Kaduna, an hour or so by road from Zaria, had government offices, public services and a few factories. It also had an NTUC office and regional officer. In this office there sometimes met together two or three other labour activists of the left. The NTUC guy even invited Ruthie and me once to dinner. This was in his small apartment, with his wife invisible except when she scurried to and fro from the charcoal stove in the tiny kitchen to the hardly larger sitting/dining room.

With the greatest of difficulty, I got the left union organisers from Kaduna up to Zaria for a staff Social Science Seminar. They had insisted on receiving their modest recompense on arrival, and then spent it on beer in the Staff Club before the seminar began. Once in the seminar they spent their time drunkenly abusing each other rather than impressing the academics on the salience of class struggle to the transformation of a neo-colonial and military-ruled Nigeria.

For the rest I was dependent on my two brief visits to Lagos, one when picking up my Land Rover, the other whilst passing through with Ruthie and the kids on our way to Dahomey and Ghana. The only other resource was what I called the Travelling Labour Seminar. This consisted of Adrian Peace, working on factory protest in Ikeja, an industrial estate near Lagos Airport (Peace 1979), of Gavin Williams, working on rural protest around Ibadan, the vast semi-rural city in Western Nigeria (Williams 1976), and, finally, of Paul Lubeck, up the road in Kano (Lubeck 1988). They were either Marxist or more generally, I guess, historical-materialist scholars, all working on their PhDs. These or other members of our left Zaria mafia turn up as contributors to a compilation by Gavin Williams (1976), or another one co-edited by Robin Cohen (Cohen and Sandbrook 1975).<sup>9</sup> Many of them turned up later in the *Review of African Political Economy*, such as the special issue on Nigeria edited by Gavin (Williams 1978). Amongst the contributors to this was another genial radical Nigerian scholar, Segun Osoba, a tall, laid-back, political sociologist from the University of Ife, whom I introduced to

Yusufu Usman, and who could have been his brother. Another hypothetical member of my hypothetical Travelling Labour Seminar was Peter Gutkind, of an earlier generation of African anthropologists, already a full professor in Canada. Peter was another genial, if somewhat erratic, scholar, converted to radicalism by 1968 and *All That*. He might have been already publishing a newsletter about employment and unemployment from McGill University, Montreal. And I had argued with his vaguely Fanonist propositions concerning the revolutionary potential of the urban poor in Africa. Peter, however, was much interested in a project I was developing in Zaria for a compilation of radical writings on Africa. 'Radical' here functioned as an alternative to 'Revolutionary' or 'Marxist'. But it also suggested at least my willingness to recognise a broader range of contributors to knowledge than those bearing the first two banners. We eventually got this collection off the ground (Gutkind and Waterman 1977) in both UK and US editions. Whilst a sharper-minded critic took us to task for the untheorised word 'radical', this good-looking, left-pluralist collection met a need. Indeed, I found a copy of it in the Workers' Library in Johannesburg, 1994, where it was still much appreciated.<sup>10</sup> Peter Gutkind himself continued for the rest of his academic life as an editor or co-editor, a sponsor of conferences and supporter of what was later to be called the New International Labour Studies (see Chapter 6).

I am not at all sure whether I got as much value out of these resources and resource people as I would have done if I had been writing about labour protest in general rather than a particular trade union centre. But at that time 'labour and politics' was what the left tended to write about in Africa. And I really only embroidered on my paper about the NTUC written, for somewhat non-academic purposes, in Prague. The major innovation was my attempt at what I called a 'neo-marxist' approach, which really meant little more (or less?) than an abandonment of the assumptions and expectations of Communist and other vulgar-marxist trade union theorising. However, I did argue that Soviet-type Communist ideology and 'concrete' aid (cement for a massive new movement headquarters) was undermining rather than strengthening the local reference and relevance of the organisation:

As a result the NTUC has moved not closer to but further away from the Nigerian working class since 1963 [the General Strike]. Thus it played no visible part in the factory strikes of 1971 .... It has tolerated the imprisonment of its top leaders (without accusation or trial) for one year with no more than token paper protests. It appears to be the traditional anti-Communism of the Nigerian security forces .... rather than any positive attitude of action of the NTUC leadership that preserves it from absorption into the Nigerian political class. (Waterman 1972:47)

I ended with some homilies about the working class as *the* modern class, the necessity for a 'mass and class unionism', and for the leadership to develop such on the basis of local realities – just like workers and unions needed everywhere else in the world.

My scepticism of the intellect was here somewhat more realistic than my optimism of the will. The Nigerian trade union movement was to be shortly confronted by the military government's intervention, a state-organised juridical enquiry, and the top-down creation of a united Nigerian Labour Congress<sup>11</sup> that the unions had been themselves unable to bring about. The multi-storey headquarters funded by the Communist world was first taken away from the NTUC and later given (I seem to recollect) to the new NLC. At the Nigerian Trade Union Tribunal of 1976 (Waterman 1987) the trade unions accused each other, as did tendencies within each of the unions. Leaders were accused of corruption. Foreign funding was identified and denounced. Whilst, however, some of the union

leaders *might* have been absorbed into the political class, the settlement between the military regime and the unions did not imply subordination of the latter, which proved themselves capable of both shabby compromise with and dramatic protest against successive regimes, military or civil. Moreover, unlike many or even most African union organisations, they are still there and still fighting (Obono 2006)!

I was, in any case, to return to Nigeria for my PhD research around a decade later, my efforts at least getting down to the level of a particular industry and the unions within it. As for my master's thesis, Robin, as my supervisor, expressed some disappointment. Since it was never published except for an article-length version (Waterman 1973), I am afraid that his criticism must have been justified. My master's degree did, however, help me to get offered a well-paid teaching job at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. Ken Post, a friend and teacher of Robin, was a professor there, and Ruthie and I had visited him once before going to Nigeria. He had mentioned a possible job coming up in labour studies at the ISS. At that time there were not many people specialised in Third World unions and labour relations. And, on the other hand, my future colleagues had no problem with my having worked for the WFTU or being some kind of Marxist. Given that The Hague was actually Ruthie's place of birth, she was delighted. So was I with what I considered my first real university job (though the Institute of Social Studies was then mostly running diploma courses and outside the Dutch university system). Given that the attractions of Nigeria were now beginning to fade, and – as I later found out – I was to earn the equivalent of a university professor in the UK, this looked like a dream come true. Although it lasted much longer than a dream, and despite the occasional nightmare there, I was to stay at the ISS until my retirement some 27 years later.

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<sup>1</sup> The note of regret comes from my later reading of his autobiography (Watters 1992). This shows him to have been a warm-hearted and self-sacrificing activist with inexhaustible capacities for union and strike organisation. He records some fifty years of labour struggles. And he was open to those of ethnic minorities and working-class women. Unlike an earlier generation of Communist militants, however, he seems to have been not particularly interested in either theory or internationalism. Nor to be someone capable of self-doubt, far less self-criticism. His book, with its detailed recollections and reflections, will nonetheless remain a resource for those studying the history of British labour protest, Communism and Communists. [http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=665&Itemid=11](http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=665&Itemid=11).

<sup>2</sup> The above-mentioned Frank Watters accepted such conditions but had trouble even getting a minimum income from the local or national party. His willingness to survive on this, and his adventures in ensuring or supplementing this, show considerable enterprise (Watters 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Although I was aware of Chris's future career and knew that he and Frances were settled in Edinburgh, we lost touch with each other as I moved away from African labour studies to other concerns. Chris got a professorship and was a founding editor of the respected *Review of African Political Economy*. Whilst a fanatical bibliographer, he seemed to have never been interested in the web. Chris and Frances eventually retired from Edinburgh to France where, amongst other things, Frances was keeping a family website that also recorded the career of Chris from school onwards. See <http://www.francesallen.com/family/chris/index.shtml>. Chris died, too young, in 2008.

<sup>4</sup> We had, in Czechoslovakia, provided the traditional bribe to Ruthie's driving instructor/examiner, in our case a bottle of whisky. This turned out to have been at least morally justifiable since Ruthie was a better driver than I with my bribe-free – and undeserved – British Army driving licence.

<sup>5</sup> The Ford Foundation reappears, in slightly different apparel, when I write about the World Social Forum of the the New Millennium (Chapter 7).

<sup>6</sup> It is with some discomfort that I refer readers here to a novel about an expatriate experience in Ibadan, in the then region of Western Nigeria, 1965-66, by David Knight (1971). This discomfort is due to the central character being a professor of English, belonging to neither of the categories I identify in Northern Nigeria, 1970-72. He is, rather, an Anglo-centric Canadian professor of

English, who never questions the value of his teaching ancient English literature and high English criticism to Nigerian students in a country and at a moment in which it is being torn apart by the consequences of British colonialism and a British-bequeathed decolonisation. His major preoccupation, apart from patronising his poor Nigerian students, is his extramarital relationship with another Canadian. Despite his knowledge of Yoruba, he shows little or no respect for, or even knowledge of, pre-colonial Nigerian cultures, nor of the burgeoning Nigerian literature in English. My friend and colleague, Ken Post, who was at the University of Ibadan more or less at the time dealt with in the novel, found the book distasteful and unreadable. I nonetheless find that it gives an impression of the pending coups and civil war in Nigeria, a vivid picture of university expatriate life (and views) in the period leading up to the first military coup in 1966.

<sup>7</sup> Some respected colleagues have a more charitable view of O'Connell than I. But my view coincides with that of a man who experienced him later as head of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, UK:

The rot really set in when James O'Connell, a genial enough Irishman with a heart of stone, became Chair and decided to turn the School into a bog-standard academic department, causing major ructions with some (by no means all) staff and the activists in the student body. These inconvenient activist pains in O'Connell's arse were gradually weeded out over the years, leaving the compliant and the complicit and the occasional reactionary ....  
<http://www.fredriley.org.uk/weblog/2004/04/war-and-peace-studies.html>.

<sup>8</sup> I cannot find a reference to this anywhere. Maybe it was not published in book form. But Dorothy has a contribution in Sandbrook and Cohen (1975), and I assume she is the co-editor of Sacks and Remy (1984).

<sup>9</sup> For an impression of Nigerian labour studies in the 1970s and following years, see *Bibliographie – Arbeiter – Nigerien* (2005(?)).

<sup>10</sup> The word 'radical' possibly allowed this book to pass the Apartheid censors. As also the fact that when I had pointed out to Peter that we had not covered Southern Africa, he had said, 'Let's not get into that can of worms!'

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nlcng.org/>, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria\\_Labour\\_Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria_Labour_Congress).

## CHAPTER 6

# Academic/Activist, 1970s-80s: Divisions of Labour

## Introduction: in Paradise, if not at Home<sup>1</sup>

*Bourgeois satisfaction is by no means to be despised; indeed, it is a recipe for peace and orderly contentment. It is also, perhaps, a trifle boring. Heinrich Heine did not mean it as a compliment when he said he would head for Holland when the end of the world was in sight, since everything in that country happened fifty years later [...]. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Netherlands had pretty much caught up with the world, and since then things often happened earlier than elsewhere: tolerance of recreational drugs and pornography; acceptance of gay rights, multiculturalism, euthanasia, and so on. This, too, led to an air of satisfaction, even smugness, a self-congratulatory notion of living in the finest, freest, most progressive, most decent, most perfectly evolved playground of multicultural utopianism.*

(Buruma 2006:11)

I never thought I would spend the rest of my working life, over a quarter of a century, in one country, one city, and one workplace – the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. But, then, these were a country, city and job that were particularly easy to spend one's life in. This is not to say that, between ages of 36 and 62, I felt I was living in paradise. Or, if it was a paradise, that I necessarily felt at home in it. I found the country somewhat self-satisfied, the city somewhat boring, and my workplace devoted to the hunt for the development grail – a search I found considerably worse than irrelevant. Moreover, I had come late to academia, had what Americans call a 'bad attitude' toward it, and found my job to be stimulating and stressful in equal proportion. Finally, it was here that I had a personal and professional – if not political – mid-life crisis. On the other hand .... it was also here that I began to reflect upon labour internationalism, to research and write upon it, to get involved in it, and, finally, to discover or invent an understanding of internationalism that went beyond a political/institutional attitude toward and practice of labour internationalism – indeed beyond both labour *and* internationalism.

Dealing with such a long period requires more structure in the account: handling it thematically risks loss of the chronological thread. I have nonetheless decided to take this risk and to try to deal with the period more or less thematically. 'More or less' means that I will occasionally defer to chronology, particularly to the break between my Labour Studies period (broadly the 1970s-80s), covered in this chapter, and Alternative Development Strategies (1980s-90s), covered in Chapter 7.

## The Netherlands: An Embarrassment of Tolerance<sup>2</sup>

After a few weeks house-hunting in The Hague, we had found a large apartment in a 1930s suburb, about twenty minutes by bike from the centre and my work. After a few months, Ruthie got part-time teaching in a Montessori school, then fulltime in another one. For the first couple of years in The

Hague, Ruthie would be repeatedly recognising places: 'I know this street', or 'I think I was hidden there'. Off the endless Laan van Meedervoort, parallel to the dunes and the sea, lived this aged couple of teachers, already retired when they had taken Ruthie in during the war. It was in their house that she had at last felt at home. Many months after Ruthie started fulltime teaching at a Montessori school not far from where they and she had lived, she was approached by an elderly woman visitor. She said, 'I know you, you're Loekie' (Ruthie's wartime Gentile name). The woman had been a teacher at the same school during the war. Ruthie, traumatised and disorientated by her wartime experiences, had not recognised the school as one in which she had actually been a pupil!

A couple of years later, we found a house of our own. This was a three-storey *herenhuis* (gentleman's house), from around 1900, and rather too big for the four of us. It was when we were purchasing this that Ruthie first heard a new Dutch word, *verzwarting* (blackening). It referred to the encroachment of immigrants around our still virgin-white middle-class street. This common-or-garden racism was hardly yet the writing on the wall. The Netherlands was still in full social-reformist mode, and much affected by social welfare and individual libertarianism. Round the corner from us there was created a walk-in community service centre. This was one of a wide variety of state-funded participatory institutions by which problems were solved before social movements had formed or organised around them. Amongst the parents of 'Ruthie's children' at school, there was much talk of 'anti-authoritarian' education. What this meant *positively* was not quite clear. Nor did it have an interest for the then-occasional black or brown immigrants on the Weimarstraat, one or two streets from ours. But it did mean we felt a certain sense of community, with both 'Ruthie's parents' and their bouncy blonde children. There was much visiting, the kids would stay overnight with us, and we would go camping together in the Dordogne (then a Dutch summer semi-colony on the *Massif Centrale* in France). Upstairs we sublet rooms, often to ISS students, some of whom became longtime friends. So did some of Ruthie's kids – who came to visit her as adults 25 years later. I was both shocked and disappointed when one of these dismissed her parents' generation, and implicitly us, as *wereldverbeteraars* (world improvers). Apparently, by now in Holland, world-improvement, as distinguished from commodifying it and treating it like a business (*de nieuwe zakelijkheid*), had become a pejorative.

In the 1970s and 80s, however, the Netherlands was a shining model of social welfare, economic redistribution, multi-culturalism and *weed*. Holland had amongst the lowest income differentials in Western Europe: I was given to understand that I was in the top quartile of income earners (possibly the lower part of this?). Social welfare provisions were extensive. One couple amongst Ruthie's parents managed to leave Holland and live in the Dordogne in France whilst drawing unemployment benefit. A friend and comrade of ours, Gerard van Alkemade, abandoned his well-paid job in a publicity agency and became a well-known, fulltime leftist activist, living, modestly, in municipally-subsidised accommodation and on his unemployment benefit. When Ruthie felt she had to stop teaching because of a severe back problem, after just a few years of teaching, some of her parents (who were also some of my colleagues at the ISS) told her she would be mad to resign rather than apply for a work-related disability pension. She did so and then got 80 percent of her full pay, adjusted for inflation, till the official age of retirement. So instead of being, or feeling, obliged to get some boring desk job, she reinvented herself as an artist at the *Vrije Akademie* (Free Academy), itself a shabby but generously-subsidised art workshop just a few blocks away from where we lived. From this moment she got a new bunch of friends, we had a new bunch of visitors, and we got a new bunch of occasional tenants also. A number of the artists teaching at the *Akademie* had state awards that provided a minimum wage in exchange for a few paintings a year, stored in some archive (or

cemetery).

Ian Buruma, sharp-tongued son of The Hague, self-exiled to the US, is right about the features of the tolerant Dutch multi-culti paradise, though he leaves out the one feature that most affected me: *development cooperation*. I wondered whether, as the Dutch had abandoned their various religious ‘pillars’, they had not traded them in for a new faith, new forms of worship and new pilgrimages or missions. The Dutch were devoting 0.7-1.5 percent of GDP to development, and were constructing a panoply of generously-subsidised funding agencies, solidarity committees and educational institutions. The Netherlands was reinventing the nineteenth century ‘social question’ as the ‘development problem’, and nineteenth century charity as twentieth century development aid. During the 1970s-80s there even appeared to be – despite changes of government – a semipermanent Minister of Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk.<sup>3</sup> By no coincidence at all, Pronk, originally a left Social Democrat, had a close association with the ISS. When, decades later, he was dubbed ‘Minister of Conscience’, I had to wonder whether this was a lay or a religious designation.

I guess I already had an ear for the Dutch language, having heard Ruthie singing it to the kids, having visited the Netherlands, and knowing some German. Dutch is more or less literally between English and German, sharing vocabulary with both, having a Germanic word order but the relative case-lessness (is this a word? and is it true?) of English. In any case, I was increasingly surrounded by it at home and with Ruthie’s family and friends. When my first two-year contract was renewed, I took Introductory Dutch two years in succession. I had to fight my corner with the Dutch, who assume – correctly – that their English is more fluent than any dumb foreigner’s stumbling attempts to speak their little language. But I was, in any case, very well disposed not only to their language but also to their culture, to the self-confidence of their womenfolk, to their work ethic, craftsmanship, taste and public helpfulness. They had, I would tell visitors, the world’s friendliest bureaucrats.<sup>4</sup> The first non-fiction book I read in Dutch, and reviewed, was an excellent new left history of Phillips by Ad Teulings (1977, Waterman 1980). This revealed another side to Dutch wartime experience to that projected by the Anne Frank story: Phillips had not only profited on both sides of the war, but provided, in Eindhoven, the socio-geographic base for the restoration of a Phillips-friendly state towards its end. In time, my Dutch colleagues at the Institute – who often spoke English to each other – became accustomed to speaking Dutch with me. It might seem as if I was being absorbed into the welcoming arms of a reforming, cosmopolitan and tolerant community.

However, my feeling of ease within the Netherlands did not necessarily encompass its political culture. My discomfort began, as I might have suggested, with the Development Church, its Priesthood (which might even call itself, self-deprecatingly, a mafia), and the Hunt for the Development Grail. I never came to terms with this. At least I never became at *peace* with it. I tried to explain what I was feeling to an academic colleague and comrade from Scotland. ‘The Dutch’, I said, ‘have a highly-developed sense of their moral and social superiority, combined with a highly-developed sense of guilt about this.’ ‘That’, he responded, is not Dutch, we have it in Scotland: it’s called Calvinism.’

A decade or so later, a Dutch friend, Anne-Ruth Wertheim, told me about an imaginative ‘global education’ project she was involved with. This meant working with white Dutch and Black immigrant kids in a rundown inner-city area, and then exchange visits with schoolkids in Cuba or Nicaragua. It seemed to me that there was an intermediary level missing here ... umm? ... the national? But for her, as with many progressive Dutch at that time, the national had no progressive connotation – at least for the Netherlands. This must have been in the 1980s, which saw the short rise but also the fast collapse

of the *Centrum Partij* ('Neither Left nor Right but Holland!'). Things even got to a point at which, in the 1990s, a proposal was tabled in Parliament for the language of higher education to be switched from Dutch to English! I was somewhat relieved when this failed, thus suggesting that, underneath the urbanity, there still lay the primitive attachment to the mother tongue that affects other human beings.

The Dutch, it seemed to me, combined their admirable cosmopolitanism with the fantasy that the world could – or should – be remade on the Dutch model. The equally admirable attachment to tolerance was combined with, or resulted from, a problematic attachment to social and political compromise (partly due to an electoral system inevitably resulting in coalition governments and the equally inevitable abandonment of electoral promises). 'We don't', said a colleague to me, during a discussion, 'want to polarise things, do we?'. His words suggested that compromise was a categorical imperative – compromise as the highest common factor? 'Don't we?', I mused aloud, coming from my own polarising tradition. 'I would have thought this depended on what the issue was. I can think of a number of issues I would feel obliged to polarise about.'

Simon Schama (1997) somewhere quotes the Dutch saying: 'God created the world, but the Dutch made Holland'. Reference here was to the extensive system of dykes (*polders*), reclaimed land and waterworks, given that about half the country lies just one metre above sea level, and a large part of the rest below. The national and social effort to build and defend this system is also given credit for the *poldermodel*, the political and social consensus that the Netherlands enjoyed. I am not sure whether my scepticism about the manner in which the Dutch had completed God's tasks was shared in the Netherlands of the 1970s-80s. My feeling was that Dutch tolerance ran out when anyone – particularly me – questioned either their tolerance or their good intentions.

There was a kind of wall-to-wall – or polder-to-polder – social democracy that seemed to include the royal family, the local Maoists and even the (then) somewhat pathetic local Nazis. During the first, short-lived, wave of anti-immigrant politics, I recall an issue of a weekly illustrated magazine on what had happened in an inner-city working-class district of Rotterdam when the first Muslim immigrants arrived. Whilst the immigrant husbands were off, sweeping the streets or working on assembly lines, the Dutch housewives set out to welcome their new neighbours, helping them with forms, teaching them essential vocabulary, showing them how to use the supermarkets. The honeymoon came to an end when the locals realised that the immigrants did not want to become Dutch. This left the Rotterdammers puzzled, disappointed and resentful. How could anyone, particularly from such backward parts of the world, *not* want to become at least *like* the Dutch?

I was shocked when I heard an English secretary from the Institute refer to the Dutch as 'The Clogs'. And even more shocked when, on reporting my shock to one of my English colleagues, he said, 'Yes, but that's because you are married into the *volk*'. I had never heard any Dutch person refer to the Dutch by this Germanic word. Obviously I *was* married into this *volk*. And therefore also into a surprisingly extended family of Ruthie's, which included various friends so close as to be practically a part of it. The most remarkable of these was Ruthie's sister, Annie Fels-Kupferschmidt, an Auschwitz survivor and major figure in the International Auschwitz Committee. Annie was 20 years older than Ruthie, coming from an earlier marriage of their common father. She was also from the Communist half of her siblings. Annie had survived the underground in the Netherlands, Auschwitz, the loss there of her first husband, the later death from cancer of her second husband (another camp survivor) in postwar Amsterdam, the crisis of Communism in 1956, and the problems of bringing up three children through all this.<sup>5</sup> And all with an impressive equanimity. It was difficult for me not to associate her with Holland and the Dutch. I was both amused and impressed, at some International Auschwitz event,

to discover that the survivors spoke to each other not in Yiddish but in German. It was the latter, after all, that was their common language. And given that most of them were either from the Communist Party or the more general left, they had no difficulty in distinguishing between Nazis and Germans.

From the personal to the political. I was – and still am - entirely charmed by the Dutch monument to their wartime queen, Wilhelmina, tucked away so discreetly that – five minutes from our old Institute site – I only discovered it by accident. The queen looks like nothing more or less than a shabby, tubby fishwife. It could have been a monument to the stoic fisherwomen of Scheveningen, awaiting the safe return of their husbands. Indeed another monument exists to these women and is rather more heroic than the first. The text on Queen Wilhelmina's monument refers to her wartime exile in the UK and Canada: 'Lonely but not Alone'.

So much for the urban, urbane, Netherlands. If, however, I wanted a buzz, or to recharge my still conflictive political batteries, then I had to leave The Hague and go back to dirty, tasteless, rundown, lively, noisy, noisome London. The UK was not and is not somewhere you would escape to if the end of the world was nigh. Halfway between Holland and the USA, it is closer to where the end of the world will begin.

In an increasingly globalised world, however, if you don't go to buzz, buzz comes to you. Ian Buruma's reflections (2006) were inspired, or in any case motivated, by the murder, in 2004, of Theo van Gogh. Van Gogh, raised in the exclusive leafy Hague suburb of Wassenaar, was an *enfant terrible* of the 1970s, self-indulgent, individualistic, arrogant, an experimental film-maker and journalistic provocateur, spilling his bile on the traditional religious and political elite of the Netherlands. So far so good. But as the Netherlands was de-confessionalised and globalised, Theo, in his role of Privileged White Man Behaving Badly, had to find other targets for his spleen. He actually began with the Jews – previously untouchable, at least amongst the educated – before moving on, more acceptably, to the Muslims. It was he who made 'goat fucker' acceptable in the media. Given his privilege, as a white, as educated, as citizen of the tolerant Netherlands, he ignored warnings that he was provoking – irrationally – the very irrationality he was railing against. He had completed his 'pro-woman' movie in which Koranic texts were projected over the bodies of semi-veiled women. As he, Dutch to the last, cycled to work in Amsterdam, he was stabbed to death by a young second-generation Moroccan immigrant – a youth marginalised from both his background (he did not master Arabic) and a new and nastier Netherlands. The country reacted in shock and horror to the assassination. This was now the second political assassination – excepting the Second World War – in some 400 years. But, in the popular mind, and to a large extent amongst the political class, Theo was also the second, and more prominent martyr to 'freedom of speech'. This freedom was, of course, something of which the class, national, gender or ethnic relativity had never been recognised in the Netherlands (Waterman 2004a).

## **The Institute of Social Studies: Developing What?**

The Institute of Social Studies was the earliest European institute of 'development studies'. Indeed, it was so early that its creation actually preceded the concept. The ISS seemed, when I arrived, to be largely staffed, at least at the higher levels, by Dutch and Indonesian returnees, or self-exiles, of the Dutch colonial project in Indonesia. Its purpose, which continues to this day, is that of training mid-career bureaucrats, technocrats and academocrats from what were called the 'developing countries'. One of those veterans was rumoured to have been the head of Dutch intelligence during the failed

‘police action’ to restore Dutch rule in Indonesia after 1945. I tried hard to imagine the mentality of Dutchmen who, having survived Nazi occupation, were prepared to play Nazis in Indonesia. The campaign is said to have cost 5,000 Dutch and 150,000 Indonesian lives.<sup>6</sup> I do not recall any of these veterans having ever said ‘sorry’. But, then, such is the nature of development studies. It is so much preoccupied with regurgative problem-solving that it is incapable of recognising itself as part of the problem it cannot solve.<sup>7</sup> For the nature of the ISS in its early years, I cannot do better than quote this official ISS bio of one of its early rector, even if its English – and surely eccentric dating – is way below the customary Dutch standard:

Professor Egbert de Vries was a prominent agricultural scientist in the latter years of the Dutch Colonial. In 1934, Professor Egbert de Vries was the second initiator of Transmigration program in Indonesia after Soekarno. Transmigration from Java Island to outside Java was implemented in order to reduce poverty. Interestingly, he is quite famous during the colonial era in which he provided first hand information about the economic situation in Indonesia. Indeed, as a consultant to the Indonesian government, he revisited Indonesia several times in the 1960s to 1970s. He is also in a position furnish first hand observations about changes in socioeconomic policy and development in Indonesia over more than 65 years. [...] Egbert de Vries was the first full-time rector of the ISS during ten years (1956-1966), well-known as ‘*rector magnificus*’. He was also as Emeritus Professor in International Development at the University of Pittsburgh. The Institute of Social Studies also awarded its honorary doctorate to Egbert de Vries in 1966. [...] In 1979, Professor de Vries was invited by The Ford Foundation to revisit the places in Java and North Sumatra where he had worked during the pre-war years. In his observation, he found that specific circumstances such as geography and available labour were the reason of complicatedly indigenous agriculture. He also adopted an individual extension approach that could concentrate on outstanding farmers, who could become pioneering example for their colleagues.<sup>8</sup>

I myself arrived, however, in 1972, just after 1968 and the rebellious 1960s. The ISS had been clearly affected by the subversion of stiff-necked Dutch normalcy. This became clear to me when I mentioned in passing, to my Canadian friend and colleague, Peter Gutkind, that there had been a student protest about the beer-dispensing machine. Peter burst into laughter at the very idea of such a facility and called his wife, Alice, to share the joke. Peter had been teaching at the ISS in the later-1950s, I think, when the Institute was dry, when male and female students lived in separate parts of the building, and the corridors were patrolled at night by the Rector’s wife. By the time I arrived, the Rector was a laid-back and non-interventionist bloke – with no relevant development background. He was prominent in a left-of-centre party known as D(emocrats)<sup>66</sup>. Each teaching group of five or ten at the ISS was, at this moment, a rule unto itself. Staff attended the lunchtime Institute Council meetings partly for the *broodjes* (rolls) and coffee. Although I did not realise it at the time, a new staff cohort was shaping up. I recognised this only at the time of my retirement, when it seemed as if one-third of the staff were joining me. Whilst, in the early-1970s, many of these were merely taking upon their shoulders the earlier-mentioned White Man’s Burden,<sup>9</sup> others had been profoundly affected by 1968.

Although the (neo-)Marxists never, ever, dominated the Institute, the image projected internationally (well, at least amongst leftist academics elsewhere) was of a paradise. The left at the ISS might have made the most noise, to have been self-confident, energetic and polemical. But it was

never a coherent body or project. It was not organised, hardly taught or researched collectively, and cordially disagreed amongst its various selves. It included Neo-Marxist Dependency Theorists, Leninists, Trotskyists, Maoists, Peasant Populists and, no doubt, others. Also the odd Stalinist. As for myself I was becoming something of a Spontaneous Workerist, although I never identified with full-blooded *operaismo* as it shaped up in Italy in the 1970s. We also received – well, invited - a stream of the Third World(ist) New leftists as shorter- or longer-term visitors. These included Andre Gunder Frank (Germany/USA/Chile), Samir Amin (Egypt/France/Senegal) and Immanuel Wallerstein (USA), Wim Wertheim (Netherlands), Ruth First (South Africa). On staff we had Ken Post (UK) himself, Gerrit Huizer (Netherlands) – who went on to set up a Third World Centre in the University of Nijmegen – Archie Mafeje (South Africa), Emile Vercrujisse (Netherlands), Ernest Feder (Germany/USA), David Baytelman (later, from Chile), Michael Wilson (South Africa), Maria Mies (later, from Germany), Kumari Jayawardena (later, Sri Lanka), Joost Kuitenbrouwer (Netherlands) and others.

Some of us were publishing in the *Review of African Political Economy* (Ken, Archie, myself). ROAPE (its acronym transformed from RAPE by the feminist Africanists involved) was a late addition to a virtual tsunami of generally radical or specifically Marxist journals that accompanied the wave of 1968, particularly in the UK and the USA. There were older ones, such as *New Left Review* in the UK and *Monthly Review* in the US. But then came such specialised academic/activist periodicals as ROAPE, *Capital and Class*, *Race and Class*, *Insurgent Sociologist*, *The Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *NACLA Review*, *Latin American Perspectives*, the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Politics and Society*. Alongside or behind these were academic associations such as the Union of Radical Political Economists in the US and the Conference of Socialist Economists in the UK. Similar publications or associations existed or developed in France, Germany, in Belgium (*Critique Politique*) and, of course, the Netherlands itself. I recall the weekly *Groene Amsterdammer* (which was at that time more red than green), journals or annuals of socialist or feminist studies, and the numerous – indeed numberless – bulletins of solidarity with the Third World in general, with particular continents and even with specific countries. Indeed, each city had its well-subsidised Third World Centre. Even The Hague eventually got one, but this hardly impacted on that city's marginal left culture.

Around the time I arrived at the ISS, there were, obviously, courses or programmes being offered in such conventional areas as economics, agriculture, public administration and international relations. But there were also several on social movements: on labour and unions, on peasant and urban movements, and, later, on women. My possibly-biased recollection is that the left staff were also doing more research, and publishing either more or more-notable books than the mainstream ones. Ken must have been publishing a book a year. Feder and Vercrujisse were publishing anti-imperialist works on agriculture or peasants. Gerrit also.<sup>10</sup> I co-published my African studies reader (with contributions from Ken, Archie, Immanuel Wallerstein, John Saul, Samir Amin, Segun Osoba, Majhemout Diop and Amilcar Cabral). Maria Mies, an anti-imperialist eco-feminist, was collaborating with the Indian Vandana Shiva, her single-authored or collaborative works being published in English in the 1980s.

The Institute itself was initially housed in one wing of the crumbling and leaky palace, right in the centre of The Hague. It was central, it had the Palace Gardens behind it, and it was surrounded by narrow streets, restaurants and shops. I was myself in a depressing office annexe, just round the corner, in a building of which the only attractions were that it contained the Labour Studies classroom,

and that it had its own free coffee and copying machines. Our kids, just back from Africa, were fascinated by both, Xeroxing® their hands or heads on the copying machine, biting chunks out of the Styrofoam® coffee cups.

## **Labour and Development, 1970s-80s: But What About the Workers?**

When I arrived at the ISS, Labour and Development (L&D)<sup>11</sup> was in the hands of Gerard Kester, a Dutch sociologist around my own age, devoted to workers' participation and self-management. WP&SM was a then common, if ambiguous, combination but it was as far as his radicalism went ... and has gone since. 'Participation' was more or less flavour-of-the-decade in the Netherlands, to be applied internally and – like other Dutch goods – exported to the lesser breeds without the law. The other flavour was, of course, 'development cooperation', though in this case for ever.<sup>12</sup> I was sympathetic to the self-management half, or quarter, of Gerard's concerns, this having been one of the directions that independent Marxists, and even rebellious workers, were looking in as and when they moved beyond insurrectionary or gradualist notions of socialism (Bayat 1987, 1991). However, the participation bit appeared to me just an extension of the dominant Dutch industrial relations notion and practice of 'social partnership', which actually meant a relationship between workers and unions on the one hand and capital or state on the other, with the workers and unions as seriously junior partners. This was something for which I had as little sympathy as I did for 'development'. The other problem, for me, was that our students were, year after year, and with one or two exceptions, middle-level bureaucrats from labour or other ministries. The exceptions were academics or union officers, but hardly more radical or even open than the Men from the Ministry. For most of the unionists, the Holy Grail was quite clearly to be found in Lake Geneva, within sight of the International Labour Organisation – then as now the Mecca (I here change religions) of social partnership. Gerard was enthusiastic, energetic, productive and determined to take the students on field trips to Yugoslavia, where he could combine teaching with his own research (Yugoslavia then being the Promised Land of participation). Gerard stuck with his subject all his life, later producing at least three books on the topic (Kester and Pinaud 1996, Kester and Sidibe 1997, Kester 2007). Gerard, with all his energy, teaching and research skills, could have made a major contribution to the labour movement if he hadn't believed in development and accepted the limits of development cooperation. Having myself been self-subordinated to an ideology and an institution, and having seen in Czechoslovakia the forcible subordination of so many intellectuals to state socialism, I was unsympathetic to colleagues so uncritical of their own society, when a critical attitude or even open opposition toward it would have cost little or nothing.

Gerard and I operated a spontaneous division of labour (no play of words necessarily intended), under which he did the sociology and the worker participation, I the politics and trade unions. In other words, whilst he was doing 'social partnership', I was doing 'class struggle'. We brought in visiting staff to do the economics or industrial relations, these including one impressively upper-caste and conservative Indian and a couple of deadly dull and certainly a-critical Yugoslav Communists from the Faculty of Politics at the University of Belgrade. The latter convinced me that any of that state's pretensions to represent socialist democracy were no more than such. Eventually Gerard recruited another Dutchman, Henk Thomas, who had done a PhD on the economics of Yugoslav self-management with the idealistic Czech-American and Social-Catholic economist, Jaroslav Vanek.

Henk, himself a social democrat with a churchy background, was another enthusiast for WP and/or SM. Later we added Jeff Harrod, an ex-working-class Londoner, sympathetic to the international trade union organisations. Jeff had written a pioneering study of Western manipulation of Jamaican unionism (Harrod 1972), inspired, however, more by a power-political view of the world than anything more radical or mobilising. Later, Jeff was combining the 'two IRs', industrial and international relations. As far as I was concerned, this meant imprisonment within two liberal academic disciplines rather than the customary single one. Also later, Jeff wrote a major political-economic study of the 'unprotected worker' (Harrod 1987). This was, unfortunately, after he had helped expel me from Labour Studies, so I did not give it the attention it certainly deserved. I benefited more from his critique of the International Labour Organisation (Harrod 1977), a body otherwise more commonly worshipped than critiqued. Jeff was a conflictive personality, as likely to dump on a left student, or to fire sideways at a colleague, as upwards toward those with significant power.<sup>13</sup> Later I found him connected with Just Solutions,<sup>14</sup> a private consultancy, involved in the kind of global social partnership operations represented by the ILO.

Despite the left-of-centre (in Dutch terms) nature of the staff and our apparently common interest in the labour movement – even, in some sense, in the emancipation of labour – these three staff and most of our visitors operated within an academic, political and theoretical universe to which I remained a stranger. They were, moreover, senior to me in status and/or academic qualification. I still had only a master's degree, and I was still fighting the class war. Moreover, I was still unable to count, or at least recognise the significance of the fact there were three of them and one of ... er? ... us? What I was trying to do was to turn Labour and Development into some kind of worker studies programme. This was madness. It was, after all, one thing to set up a feminist women's programme at the Institute – something which happened around 1980. There existed in this case the following preconditions: 1) an unoccupied academic space/discipline or subject, 2) a movement created by women's struggles in and beyond the West, 3) legitimacy granted by the first UN World Conferences on Women, 4) participants either already feminist or open to feminism, 5) highly-motivated and brilliant feminist academics, mostly from the left. None of these conditions existed for a hypothetical Marxist, or even generally socialist, labour studies programme. Eventually, therefore, the Gang of Three kicked me out of Labour Studies and nearly out of the Institute. I will return to this.

Despite my junior position within the programme, my limited academic experience and a decade of short-term contracts,<sup>15</sup> I struggled to develop an independent Marxist understanding of labour and unions in the Third World. And, of course, to communicate this to the friendly but generally unmotivated Third World bureaucrats and the occasional rightwing trade unionist (these were the ones who got the equally occasional fellowships from unions in Western Europe). A Marxist understanding implied, for me, not only a rejection of liberal-democratic, developmentalist or simple social-reformist approaches but a surpassing of Leninist (including Stalinist, Trotskyist and Maoist) ones. For most of the 1970s this search led to the production of a stream of articles and reviews, some in academic, others in political magazines. Emblematic, perhaps, would be one in the then-Third-Worldist socialist magazine, *Monthly Review*. In a neat, if schematic, piece I concluded that

Despite complexity and ambiguity, I see a determinate process occurring in the Third World. This is the development of the one *necessary* modern class [...]. But this ... does not at all imply working-class-led insurrection or revolution [...]. I would argue that at present the working class in the Third World reveals in general a radical-democratic consciousness .... The transition to mass socialist-revolutionary consciousness does not

come about of itself, spontaneously: it is produced among them by revolutionaries, including those of working class origin. (Waterman 1977: 62-4. Original stress)

Later it turned out that the ‘determinate process’ carried rather less necessity than the ‘complexity and ambiguity’. My critique, elsewhere in the piece, of traditional Marxist-Leninist approaches clearly did not apply to my own Marxism, nor to the eschatological element in the Marxist tradition.<sup>16</sup>

In the early-1970s I got involved in a left debate about the ‘labour aristocracy’ and the ‘semi-proletarianised peasantry’ in the social transformation of Africa (customarily thought of by us as the African Revolution). This debate had been sparked by Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul, a couple of brilliant New Left political-economists, who continued, for many years, to produce eminently serious, original and socially-committed work.<sup>17</sup> Giovanni and John, then based in Dar es Salaam, and sympathetic to both Dependency Theory and the African Socialist project of Julius Nyerere, had argued that the unionised workers in the organised sector of the economy were incorporated into imperialism and compradore capitalism in Africa. Whilst at ABU in Nigeria our gang had had energetic exchanges about these categories. I was not enchanted with either the Dependency Theory or the political-economic determinism of Giovanni and John. Moreover, my reading of British labour history and admittedly-limited knowledge of Nigerian trade unionism in no way suggested either that rich workers were more conservative or that poor labourers were more radical (as distinguished from volatile). And in reading back on the classical Marxist uses of the ‘labour aristocracy’ I came to the conclusion that this was less a Marxist theory or even a Marxist concept (i.e. related to Marxist class theory) than a Marxist rationalisation for the failure of the working class to behave as – according to Marxist eschatology – it ought (Waterman 1975a, 1975b).<sup>18</sup>

I was standing on the tips of my tiny academic toes during the 1970s. I was depressed to discover myself envying Professor Ponsioen, who was on the point of retiring from the academic rat race – especially since his name sounded to me like ‘pension’. Feeling under pressure to show that I, too, could get a PhD, I combined my theoretical concerns with my political experience to propose a PhD on the ‘labour aristocrats’ and ‘semi-proletarianised peasants’ within the Port of Lagos, Nigeria. I began my work around 1975 and spent five or six long years on it. I did this alongside my teaching, but since we were only running a nine-month diploma course, and since this did not itself require more than three or four days a week, time was available. According to the Dutch PhD system at that time, registration only required recognition of previous qualifications and acceptance by a *promotor*. Jan Breman, a prominent Dutch anthropologist with a particular interest in Indian labour (if not unions or protest) agreed to take me on. However, Jan left me to my own meagre devices. I had really no experience of empirical research, had never studied research methods, and my total field research in Lagos was to amount to a bare 12 weeks, spread over four or five years. One thing I did have going for me were the apparently unlimited, but anyway little used, research funds of the ISS. Many staff never even took advantage of that standard academic perk, the academic conference.<sup>19</sup> One year, Gerard, as Research Coordinator, stopped me in the corridor to tell me I had been the second biggest research spender in the Institute. ‘Are you’, I asked, ‘expressing a complaint or gratitude?’ The expenses were for flights, per diems and excess baggage in the form of sacks of documents donated by a port union veteran. I also benefited from visits to the headquarters of the International Transportworkers Federation (ITF) in London. Grateful for all the background material, which helped me find a way through the labyrinth of Lagos cargo-handling unionism, I first produced a history of such (Waterman 1982). At the same time, I was doing extensive bibliography and documentation on both my project area and on Nigerian unionism more generally. This was published in the relatively new form of the

microfiche (Waterman 1978-81), allowing me to give a couple of sets of such, and the necessary viewers, to Nigerian academia and unions.

Whilst pursuing a PhD, tenure and promotion, I was also trying to extend my academic activities politically. I was, well, trying to be the very model of an engaged academic. At the same time I was quite aware that I was doing this as some kind of compensation for what I considered to be my limited academic abilities. My engagement began with South Africa ... and with Dutch development cooperation! A woman who had worked for a Dutch church development agency in South Africa was looking for someone who might be interested in the Institute for Industrial Education in Durban, South Africa. I read some of the IIE materials and realised that they were independent of the African National Congress and the associated South African Congress of Trade Unions and South African Communist Party. Given my Prague experience of the SACTU and my knowledge of its dependence on the Communist bloc, I could hardly but welcome signs of the rise within South Africa of an autonomous workers' movement and of intellectuals associated with such. Out of the IIE there developed the *South African Labour Bulletin* (Waterman 1995a), with which I long remained in touch. In the first years this meant contact with young white labour specialists, in particular Eddie Webster, later to found the Sociology of Work Programme (SWOP) at the University of Witwatersrand.

That there were few if any non-whites amongst them was because of discrimination in the education system, and because whites lived under a quasi-liberal dispensation. This did not necessarily mean that they were immune from banning orders or worse. Their most significant source of inspiration, Rick Turner (himself inspired by Paris, 1968), was shot and killed, through a window at his home, by some Apartheid assassin. His second wife, Foszia Fisher, visited us in The Hague.<sup>20</sup> She made explicit the tension that existed between the external and internal movement against Apartheid. Returning to The Hague from London she said, quite without bitterness, that as far as the anti-Apartheid movement in Europe was concerned, 'the only good South African is a dead, imprisoned or exiled South African'. She was not referring to Rick since he was then still alive. The rigidity of the ANC/SACTU was demonstrated to me during an anti-Apartheid seminar at the African Studies Centre, Leiden, where an ANC *apparatchik* from London parroted an official position totally irrelevant to the seminar topic. Disenchanted as I had become with Communists and nationalists, I welcomed the opportunity to relate both to a rising labour movement and to intellectuals involved with such.<sup>21</sup>

I also ran a short course on trade unionism for a group of Namibians. A Dutch trade union had apparently set aside money for such a course and – given my African labour education experience – I was the obvious person to run it. There were two problems, first that I only had a few weeks to prepare a course for a country about which I knew nothing, second that there had been labour protest but there were no trade unions in Namibia. This was something which the Dutch unions were either themselves unaware of or forgot to inform me about. They were doing this actually for the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO). SWAPO had simply picked out a half-dozen young, secondary-educated men and women, of whom I think only one had ever done waged work as a temporary clerk in a mine. Then appeared the third problem, that SWAPO was currently in crisis, due to an internal purge which had resulted in executions. The small group of students, who were intended by SWAPO to actually create a union organisation for Namibia, were clearly depressed by this development, which had reached the British press, and were possibly even fearful for their return to Southern Africa. I did what I could to reassure them and offer assistance. For the rest, I recruited any Namibia specialists I could reach for teaching. And I did my best with whatever materials I still had from Prague, or could improvise in The Hague.

My first book (mentioned in Part 1, Chapter 5) was a product of my African period rather than of my labour interest. However, it was an outcome, also, of our informal labour seminar in Nigeria, since my co-editor, Peter Gutkind had visited us in Zaria whilst attached to the University of Ibadan. Even before this, in Birmingham, I had been in dialogue with him about the respective revolutionary roles of the working class and the urban poor. Peter at that time had Fanonist sympathies. The book itself was this reader on radical African studies (Gutkind and Waterman 1977). It was published in the UK and the USA, in both cases with eye-catching covers. I have already mentioned that when I visited the Workers' Library in Johannesburg, almost 30 years later, it was still on the shelves.<sup>22</sup>

Within the Netherlands, I got increasingly involved with something we began to call 'shopfloor internationalism'. This was primarily represented by the Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE), housed in Amsterdam at the HQ of the left international think-tank, the Transnational Institute (TNI). The same building housed the SOBE (Centre for Research on Multinational Companies), orientated toward the Dutch unions and public, and toward the interests of the South.

TIE, along with maybe a half-dozen other 'international labour support groups' (my term) was a beneficiary of both the 1970s wave of shopfloor labour activism in Western Europe, and of Dutch state funding for such solidarity movements as those against Apartheid. Created in 1978 and grouping some 40 other groups, TIE also provided an early and spontaneous model of that new international(ist) social movement form, *the network*. Whilst neither opposing the dominant trade unions nor explicitly questioning their institutional form, TIE obviously acted as a pep-group and an irritant – the grain of sand within the oyster. Its main activity was arranging or hosting network meetings and providing information. The *TIE Bulletins* were mostly devoted to one country (e.g. Brazil), industry (auto, agribusiness, information technology) or company (Ford). The bulletins were also models of both attractive design and of information alternative to that available from either the dominant media or the unions themselves. I seem to recall that the first of the shopfloor networks was, indeed, one initiated by Ford motorworkers at Dagenham, London. And I seem also to recall that this was an initiative of Communist shopstewards there. Within the UK, around this time, there was a mushrooming of labour or labour and community support centres, such as the Coventry Workshop. In London there was a more internationally-orientated outfit, Counter Information Services (CIS). From 1972 to 1983 it produced 33 'anti-reports', dealing, for example, with the Lucas corporation, South African labour protest, women, Unilever, insurance.<sup>23</sup> Within the Netherlands, such other international labour education or support groups developed as the Tilburg-based Industrial Restructuring Network Europe (IRENE). Many of the so-called Third-World 'country committees' took a particular interest in labour questions, as did the Utrecht-based India Werkgroep at the time of the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, 1984. My initial role with respect to these groups or networks was one of observation since I was not then involved in shopfloor internationalism even as a researcher. But it was through TNI meetings that I got to know the shopfloor internationalists and international labour service centres in the UK, Germany, Scandinavia, Hongkong and elsewhere, as well as the Marxist academics working on labour as capitalism globalised. Eventually, as we will see, my role came to be that of both supporting and reflecting on these new forms of labour internationalism.

Within the Institute I was trying to advance the international class struggle by organising a workshop on 'Third World Strikes' in 1977. It eventually resulted in a special issue of the ISS journal, *Development and Change* (Waterman 1979a). This had contributions on or from Pakistan, Namibia, Argentina, Ghana and Singapore, on research methodology (by my old Kano friend, Paul Lubeck), and

with a valuable final overview item by the British Marxist labour – and strike – specialist, Richard Hyman.<sup>24</sup> I did nonetheless try, in the later-1970s, to make myself functional to my colleagues' views of 'labour and development', to the Institute's 'development education', and to the Dutch trade union notion of international solidarity – a concept used interchangeably with 'trade-union development cooperation'. I even *initiated* our relationship with the Dutch FNV. Indeed, my first public performance in Dutch was for the International Department of the Dutch social-reformist unions, around the end of the 1970s. This was to lead to a fruitful collaboration between the FNV<sup>25</sup> and the ISS. Any hopes I had here were rapidly dashed. When I proposed to the FNV that we set up an occasional seminar for the exchange of opinions between the International Department of the FNV and Netherlands-based researchers on Third World labour, I was turned down flat. Their only interest, they made clear, was in what *services* we might provide them with. 'Our international policy', said Piet Jeukens, then head of the International Department, 'is made by our members.' Given the quasi-total control of policy by the leaders of the FNV, and such officials as Piet himself, I considered this a disingenuous reply. And given that I was not only the first member of the FNV in the ISS but the person who was promoting it there, I was also offended. In any case, I was, after my WFTU experience, through with service-provision to union leaderships.

This dismissive and instrumental attitude toward critically-minded left sympathisers was typical of national and international unions at that period, which left them dependent on what might trickle down through the media from conformist intellectuals. On another occasion, being in India for a conference (see below), I had agreed to a FNV request that I evaluate a development project for 'the marginalised rural poor' it was funding. My motive for so agreeing was that an Indian colleague, Arvind Das, had told me that it was a Potemkin Village.<sup>26</sup> The then head of the FNV international department happened to be in New Delhi, and even attended a session of our workshop. I explained to him that the workshop had required me to prioritise other activities. When he, reasonably, pressed me about this, I told him what Arvind had told me – that it was a bullshit project. Around the same period, an FNV leader admitted, at least in Dutch and in the FNV international bulletin, that many of the unions it was supporting in Africa were actually playing 'town mayor in wartime'. This expression referred to those Dutch acting as intermediaries under the Nazi occupation. It is a rather severe pejorative, along with other such postwar expressions as *fout* (wrong during the war) or *moffenhoer* (for the pathetic Dutch women who had consorted with German soldiers). This admission did not, of course, lead the FNV to change its attitude toward the African trade union leaders it was itself collaborating with. As the 'new realism' made its way into Dutch society, one official of the FNV's International Department argued that, in its international work, the FNV should 'return to core business'. I do not recall what the core business precisely was. I was simply appalled at this crap managerial jargon being applied to what purported to be international solidarity activity.

Despite my unease with what the Dutch unions were doing, I coordinated a Dutch-funded course in Ghana and an inter-African one in Tanzania. In the first case this involved collaboration with our labour studies economist, Henk Thomas. I recall producing a set of teaching texts jointly with him. The experience was not a happy one. Henk clearly thought my ignorance of the Gini Coefficient (which measures income inequality within countries) disqualified me as any kind of labour specialist. I regretted that I had never got the Gini out of the bottle. But, in my Tanzania course, I certainly began to take off from workers, unions and development. I offered here a four-part course on 'The Labouring Poor in the Third World'. This dealt, in neo-Marxist political-economic mode, with structural position, consciousness, organisation and international policy toward this category (Waterman 1979b).<sup>27</sup>

My problem in Labour and Development, however, was not simply my ignorance of an eminently useful economic instrument, nor was it the disparity between my popularised neo-Marxism on the one hand and Dutch developmentalism on the other. It was also with the African trade unions (though not with the union officers involved). Teaching my Dutch-funded course in Arusha, Tanzania, I discovered that the African and inter-African unions – happy with any critique of the West or its unions – were less sympathetic toward my critique of African trade unions, of the World Federation of Trade Unions, or even of African governments.

My colleagues, however, threw themselves enthusiastically into the service of the FNV. Gerard created and ran APADEP, a decade- (or decades-?) long project on worker participation in Africa, largely or wholly dependent on generous FNV-cum-state funding. A considerable part of the funding, of course, was devoted to keeping an office and staff at the ISS. Gerard was later pissed off to hear that I had been ridiculing his project to labour people in South Africa. I had said there that it might be nice to have unions autonomous from the state *before* urging them to become partners with it. Later, Henk Thomas, now a professor, did a Dutch state- or union-funded evaluation of Dutch union development cooperation. Such evaluations (still being done by ISS-colleagues and others in 2006) inevitably take place under parameters set by the contractor. Actually, in reality, by the *sub*-contractors, since the FNV is dependent for almost all of its development-funding activities on the Dutch state. I once made a point about this dependency to someone from the FNV International Department. He said: ‘What’s wrong with it? It’s from tax money. It comes from the workers originally’. ‘On the same grounds’, I responded, noticing his Ban-the-Bomb badge, ‘you could talk about the workers’ nuclear weapons or nuclear power stations.’

In one of my first contributions to the ‘new international labour studies’ (see below), I had set out this paradigm in opposition to, amongst others, ‘handmaiden research’. But such services to the Dutch unions went further. Out of FNV-ISS collaboration there eventually came a volume edited by Henk, and published by that major source of left studies of Third World and international labour, Zed Books. It was entitled *Globalisation and Third World Unions* (Thomas 1995). Now, Henk was a labour economist and by no possible stretch of the imagination an expert on trade unions. The report was an a-theoretical and eclectic ragbag, lacking even a comparative framework. It was also one in which, fashionably, ‘globalisation’ appeared in the title. But, as with most fashions, this had only to do with appearance: the word could not be found within the work itself. The origin of this effort was a generously-funded and supposedly independent evaluation of Dutch union development cooperation. If, as I assume, the Dutch patron had also *subsidised* the book, we were moving here from the status of handmaiden research to that of the vanity publication. This closed circle of development cooperation and, in fact, self-evaluation – followed by ministerial approval and public mutual self-congratulation – was, and presumably still is, typical of the development mafia.<sup>28</sup>

Toward the end of the 1970s the tensions within Labour and Development rose to the point that the Gang of Three decided I had to go. I don’t think they necessarily *intended* me to be thrown out of the ISS. But given that 1) I still didn’t have tenure, and 2) had put all my ISS energy into labour studies, the implication of being squeezed out of this programme was that I could also be squeezed out of the Institute. For some dumb reason I had never challenged my two-yearly re-application for a contract, something that by 1980 was certainly in contradiction with Dutch labour law. What I rather did, as the threat grew, was to cover my backside by creating, with Ken and one or two others, the International Labour Research and Education Foundation (ILERI). I thought, somewhat pathetically, that if I did get thrown out of the ISS, I could at least make a living in one of those state-funded NGOs I had been

previously castigating.

It turned out that I was only the first person to be worked out of labour studies. Later, Gerard, Jeff Harrod and Ken Post all went. And then labour studies added, or transmogrified into, 'human resources', 'small and medium enterprises' – new flavours for new decades of development disaster-management. Only Henk Thomas and those who deferred to him remained. Eventually, labour studies pretty much disappeared as a significant focus at the ISS. By the later 2000s it seemed to amount to a six-and-a-half week diploma programme, plus some attachment to the Global Unions Research Network of the International Labour Organisation. Yet, in the meantime, there had developed in Germany a Global Labour University,<sup>29</sup> which is itself in collaboration with other labour studies centres internationally. The GLU is no less social-democratic than was Labour and Development during my time at the ISS (Hofer 2006), but it is at least addressed to unions and globalisation and attended primarily by unionists from the South.

I was able to use ILERI within the ISS (taking considerable advantage of ISS resources) to organise several shoestring workshops, and to publish several compilations. The first was a book-format collection, with a paper cover, *For a New Labour Internationalism* (Waterman 1984). Over the years it sold 500-1,000 copies. It contained contributions on the 'new international division of labour' (Third World cheap labour), on the contribution of women's labour to this, criticism of traditional union internationalism, and on not only the ambiguities of left solidarity with Solidarnosc in Poland, but even of our own shopfloor internationalism. This was a pluralistic collection, including social-democratic, feminist, Trotskyist, workerist (the Italian autonomist tendency), and other contributions. Doing this commercially, alongside NILS, involved a considerable amount of work, such as both delivering them, by car, to a left book distributor in the UK and later picking up the unsold ones. So later publications were simple A4 collections or original papers plus offprints, similar to those we did for ISS courses. The second set was *The Comintercomdoc Papers* (Waterman 1985). Comintercomdoc meant 'computerised internationalist documentation and communication'. This set was based on an innovatory workshop, and brought together a wide range of Dutch and international 'alternative' academics, documentalists and computer specialists, as well as interested students. It must have been the first ever course at the Institute on what was not yet called the 'internet' (never mind the 'web' or 'cyberspace'). Another such publication was *The Old Internationalism and the New* (Waterman 1988c). And possibly the last was *Trade Unions, Movementism and Internationalism* (Waterman 1989), a bilingual, English/Spanish set. The star performer here was my French/Peruvian colleague and friend, Denis Sulmont, the doyen of Peruvian labour studies and himself an active labour internationalist. These workshops and publications were, of course, all spin-offs from NILS. As with the bulletin, I was here more concerned with putting stuff together and getting it out than in any particular academic niceties. The collections clearly followed my research interests, and my theoretical/ideological movement from labour internationalism to the new internationalisms (labour, thirdworldist, feminist, anti-war and ecological).

Much of this extra-curricular activity bridged the period in which I was expelled from the paradise of labour studies but not yet landed in some other place.<sup>30</sup> This was a long-drawn-out business and extremely painful, since I blamed myself for failing to adjust myself to the obviously unfavourable balance of forces within the programme. I recall it as occurring around the turn of the decade from the 1970s to the 1980s. Perhaps the last straw for my colleagues was when I proposed that we set up the labour studies programme as a dialogue between what I called 'liberal' or 'reformist' labour studies and Marxist ones. 'But', one of my scandalised colleagues protested, 'you are trying to reduce all non-

Marxist approaches to one: there are dozens of different approaches to labour studies'. 'Yes', said I cutely, as I pulled the noose round my neck a little tighter, 'and there are many different aspects and kinds of Marxist labour studies too.'

I may have earlier suggested that I was, in my fantasies about Marxism and worker studies, thinking of feminism and women's studies. Indeed, I had been involved in the creation of the women's studies programme at the Institute during the late-1970s. This had actually been an idea of my colleague, Gerard Kester, as a device for getting rid of Mia Berden, on the staff of labour studies but who had not taught one class since I had come to the ISS. Mia was an elderly, energetic single woman, of social Catholic background, who was reputed to have had played a courageous role in the Resistance. Later she had worked on women's labour in one of the ministries. This had promoted her sideways into the Institute. When Mia was scheduled to teach in the programme, the students would write up on the blackboard, 'Miss Berden will be sick today'. However, we were now entering the international women's decade of the UN. And – demonstrating the respect the ISS had for women – it was thought that by putting Mia in charge we could solve two problems with one programme. Out of either a sense of guilt or of responsibility, I got involved in the relevant committee. In the event, Mia, who was not only energetic but committed to women's struggles, embraced feminism and threw herself into this project. A feminist women's programme was, thus, eventually created at the ISS.<sup>31</sup> By this time I had withdrawn from the committee, but I observed the new programme with envy. The year after I was thrown out of labour studies, I offered a course to the Women and Development programme on 'Labour Movements and Socialism, Women's Movements and Feminism'. Acceptance of this course offering was a gesture of solidarity from friends in the new programme. But it happened to be a rather popular course, remembered by participants for years to come. The following year, however, without thanks or explanation, the course was dropped. So much for solidarity. I was left dangling without any teaching, and still without tenure.

Fortunately for me, Ken Post was on a relevant ISS committee at that time. And there were liberal-democratic Dutch colleagues around who assumed that the Labour Studies people had their knives into me because I was a Marxist, rather than a Marxist pain in the arse. Between them, in any case, they saved mine. At that moment I could maybe have taken advantage of a Dutch civil service practice by which, in case of personality conflicts, one could be actually pensioned off at the queen's pleasure. This would have been an amazing financial deal for me. But, of course, I would have been profoundly humiliated to have been expelled from my prestigious academic paradise at the age of 40-something.

I started developing a new project with my young colleague and friend from India, Arvind Das. This was, in principle, a path-breaking one, entitled the Trade Unions and the Labouring Poor in India (TULPI). It was based on the recognition that the unions represented only a fraction of a fraction of working people in India and that any meaningful working-class movement would need to represent the non-unionised and un-unionisable. Each of us was, however, Engels and expecting the other to be Marx. (more about India and me in Chapter 7). The project broke up very publicly at an otherwise unique international seminar in New Delhi. And I had to return to The Hague with my tail even further between my legs. A year or so later I received in the mail from India a 270-page, double-column volume (Das, Nilikant and Dubey 1983). When I opened it, I found a printed dedication on the flyleaf: 'For Peter Waterman in Solidarity'. Ten or fifteen years after the original seminar, Arvind mentioned to me in passing that the TULPI project had actually been approved by a prestigious Indian research body! By this time, unfortunately, Arvind had left academia, was doing journalism and making documentaries – still sometimes about labouring people.<sup>32</sup> And I was by then busy with other work.

I kept working on my PhD dissertation. I got very depressed about this, particularly in trying to process a survey I should never have even begun. I would sit in my study at home, writing and re-writing. Although I thought I had severe writer's block, I realised that if I continued producing 3-5 pages a day, I would, in 180 days have ... well ... a lot of pages. However, there was another problem. I had fallen out with Jan Breman, my supervisor. I had kept feeding him chapter drafts, on which I got no response until he had the complete thing in his hands. He then told me that I would have to extensively add to or rewrite it. After four or five years, there was no way I could imagine myself doing this and I was anyway pissed-off with him. Fortunately, I was taken up by my former colleague, Gerrit Huizer, now running his Third World Studies Centre in Nijmegen. Gerrit was a specialist on peasant movements in Latin America, a confirmed bachelor (as far as I knew), a populist and, as I once said to him 'Holland's oldest hippie'. He was delighted when I later gave him a badge from the UK: 'Ageing Hippies Against the Bomb!'. His radicalism and eccentricities did not prevent him from playing a respectable role not only in the University of Nijmegen but in a series of academic and development cooperation bodies. Neither the one nor the other, it turned out, was going to prevent him from making me add to and rewrite my dissertation! So, once every few months, for a year or two, I was making one of the longest possible train journeys in the Netherlands (about two hours) for sessions with him in Nijmegen. Eventually, my work was completed to his satisfaction and was awarded a PhD, though with no particular bells or whistles (Waterman 1983). Being in the middle of a midlife crisis, I did not want even to *be* at this ceremony. Nor was my thesis published. Nor did I know what I was going to do with the rest of my life, academic or not. All I had got out of my five years or more of work was, well, OK, a PhD, one edited compilation, an article or two, a number of documentation spin-offs ... and an attractive tape-slide show which I could take back on a following trip for the Nigerian unions involved.

I had been having, I think, a postpartum depression after my PhD was delivered. What on earth was I going to write about for the rest of my life? Then, in 1983, I received an invitation from Roger Southall, an English guy then in Canada, to attend a 1984 conference on Third World trade unions in Ottawa. Twiddling my thumbs in my room-cum-documentation centre, I had a light-bulb moment: I would turn my hobby – and hobby-horse – into a paper. The paper was entitled 'Needed: A New Communications Model for a New Labour Internationalism'. The argument was that the new labour internationalism was largely a communications internationalism – that internationalism was today primarily carried by all those magazines, videos, bulletins and posters I had been collecting. More particularly, it was borne by the new electronic media I had been observing in the international labour service groups, and by the networking they were practising (Waterman 1988b). As I extended these ideas later from labour to social movements, I found myself a vocation which I followed for not only my remaining years at the ISS, but in my retirement later. The Institute, and then the Dutch pension authority, would pay for me to pursue my hobby. And the hobby might itself become a political project.

## **Things Fall Apart**

I have referred to my midlife crisis above, though I may not have always used this term. However painful and difficult it might be to write about this, I do feel obliged to do so. This is one of many things I was learning from the feminists. I have not dated this section because I am not quite sure

when it started and when it ended, nor even what events might be taken as indicating such a beginning and end. But I seem to recall it beginning in the early 1980s and going on until Ruthie and I separated in 1986. So far, I have mentioned the pressure I felt in coming late to my new profession and the feeling that I was standing on the tips of my toes to prove myself here. This was, however, compounded, by the political, insofar as I was trying to prove myself professionally whilst trying to simultaneously advance a social commitment that was outside the Dutch mainstream, and which had little if anything to do with the ‘development’.

To summarise this crisis: my teenage son, Danny, was in noisy teenage rebellion, having dropped out of school, left home for one of several successive squats, he was heavily into grass, reading (indeed experiencing) the work of Carlos Castaneda,<sup>33</sup> and returning home only to slam doors and shout at us; my teenage daughter, Tamara, was still at home, but also dropping out of school and drifting or jumping into the hard drug culture; I was escaping all this by disappearing into my upstairs study to work on my PhD; and Ruthie (losing her children and her husband) was falling in love with my Indian research assistant and friend, Sanjay. To complete the humiliation, I realised that what was most bothering me was not all this but the crisis in my professional life. I don’t think I can have been the only man whose implicit definition of the self is ‘I have a job therefore I am’.<sup>34</sup>

After a humiliating but enlightening initial interview with a male therapist I was eventually sent to one of his female colleagues. She seemed not to have herself noticed the arrival in the Netherlands of either the permissive society, the sexual revolution or feminism. When I reported once to Ruthie and a female friend of ours what the therapist had said to me, they were appalled. So I dropped her and gradually climbed out of the hole I had dug myself into. I was not helped in this process by male colleagues at the Institute who were themselves breaking up with their wives. One of them understood my approach as a request for the name of a good lawyer. The second was – as other colleagues later said to me – socially autistic. So, of course, I did what other men in deep trouble do, I talked with sympathetic female colleagues. And, eventually, I began to have relationships with other women. At the lowest point in my depression I realised that I was being careless in traffic. Also in my relationships with these other women. Careless of them in some cases and putting myself in danger with others.

On my bike route to the Institute there was a tarmac path surrounded by greenery on both sides. I took particular note when I noticed a tiny oak plant forcing its way through the tarmac. I was cheered by this emanation. And when one day it was squashed flat by some presumably untroubled cyclist, I had to laugh. This may have been because I was myself surviving the most difficult period of my life. Later I had two life-threatening diseases and operations. After my major crisis, however, these were to be taken in my stride. They were, after all, merely or mostly physical.

## **The New(sletter of) International Labour Studies**

One of the things that kept me going during my personal/political/professional crisis was a new international academic/political project. Whilst my own programme was devoting itself to ‘Labour and Development’, I got involved with the ‘New International Labour Studies’. Active here were two old friends and colleagues from my Africa days, Robin Cohen and Peter Gutkind. Peter was running the Centre of Developing Area Studies at McGill in Montreal and editing a bulletin which developed into a journal, *Labour, Capital and Society*. This, amazingly, still survives and has recently celebrated

its twentyfifth anniversary.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, it was Canadians, often the CDAS itself, who hosted most of the early and crucial international conferences. The first, in Toronto, 1973, led to an excellent compilation on the African working class (Sandbrook and Cohen 1976). The second, in Montreal, 1975, resulted in a series of *CDAS Working Papers*. Although international labour studies seemed, initially, to mean 'third world labour studies', the move beyond the latter was made later by Robin himself. Responding to debate around the theme, he said:

I am now persuaded that we should define relevant themes in terms of a) those issues largely concerning metropolitan capitalist countries, b) those issues that pertain to established socialist societies, c) those issues that are especially relevant to peripheral socialist societies, d) those issues that pertain to peripheral capitalist countries or zones, and e) those issues that link two or more of these groupings together, or transcend them entirely. (Cohen 1980:12)

According to the major later contributor to this project, Ronaldo Munck (1988, 2004), I was myself giving international labour studies a distinctive political specification. Waterman, he said, is

far less concerned with the academic setting and the deficiencies of area-studies or traditional labour studies. He claims an explicit Marxist project and rejects the vague label of 'radical'. Where this approach scores is in its single-minded pursuit of labour internationalism, particularly through electronic communication means. (Munck 2004:239)

During this wave of international conferences, Robin had met up with a couple of other researchers in the US, one of them being a US historian of Latin America labour, Hobart Spalding Jr. (Spalding 1977).<sup>36</sup> In my absence they sort of nominated me editor of a new bulletin on the area and I sort of bowed to the wishes of the majority. The bulletin was called the *Newsletter of International Labour Studies* (NILS, 1978-89), was intended to be a quarterly and it continued for a decade. During a difficult period in my professional and personal life, it also helped keep me afloat.

In an editorial statement in the first issue of what I should distinguish as 'NILS the Bulletin', I hit certain notes on the new international labour studies, additional to those already struck. One of these was to extend the address of the academic project and the bulletin to labour activists:

Trade unionists and scholars concerned with labour in Africa, Asia and Latin America have always been aware of the international nature of production, distribution and exchange .... The 19<sup>th</sup> century faith in an international working class that would destroy cosmopolitan capitalism was halted by the isolation of sections of this class within liberal-democratic, colonial, fascist or communist polities .... Now the international trade union organisations are largely reduced to their head offices and their archaic formulae, unable to provide anything to a world crying out for coordination, strategy and leadership .... Throughout all 'three worlds' we do see increasing evidence of independent class organisation and action .... Yet capitalism divides as fast as it unites .... The present world situation provides only an opening: it requires purposeful and determined action to make use of it. (NILS, No. 1, 1978: pp. 1, 12)

This was, as usual with me, a somewhat futuristic declaration. I called NILS a 'paste, print and post' production. I also called it 'dirty but fast'. I was more concerned to get stuff out than what it

looked like. NILS was the kind of activist international bulletin common to the period preceding full computerisation. What we did have at the ISS were IBM System 6 word-processors the size of a desk. So this meant I could get nice typesetting. We also had scissors, paste, offset printing machines and the post office. I would get either camera-ready copy, or have text typed up, then cut and paste it on a large A3 sheet, have this reduced to A4, get this printed cheaply by the ISS printer (who assured me he did this elsewhere in his own time), then fold them to A5, staple, address and stamp them, and carry them to the post-office for mailing. In the first years I got financial or practical support from Ken Post and one or two other ISS colleagues. I formed an editorial board or working group including ISS labour studies students. One was Rhoda Reddock<sup>37</sup> from Trinidad. As, however, I moved away from the Labour Studies programme, and the de-politicising 1980s progressed, the group was reduced. Robin continued to take an interest from faraway places with strange-sounding names (Jamaica, Warwick), but was increasingly involved in migration studies. As the steam ran out of the project, the team consisted of myself and a friend, Kim Scipes, a working-class US student of mine who had been previously involved with *International Labour Reports* (c. 1984-90) in the UK. I was also paying him, from the NILS account, to extend a computerised index connected with the newsletter.<sup>38</sup>

NILS ran special issues on Tanzania (co-edited by ISS staff member, Paschal Mihyo), Internationalism, Women and Homework (Isa Baud and Anneke van Luijken), Indian Labour Studies (guest-edited by visiting staff member, Arvind Das), International Labour Migration (Robin Cohen), on Poland and Solidarnosc, on Trade Union Internationalism, Asia, Europe, Brazil, Indonesia (Celia Mather), the First World, Labour and the New Social Movements, the New Social Movements themselves (a major paper by Andre Gunder Frank and his wife, Marta Fuentes), Solidarnosc and International Solidarity, Trade Unions and the Third World (Roger Southall), The New Internationalism and the New International Labour Studies, the USA 'Beyond Trade Union Imperialism' (Kim Scipes), and Workers' Control at the Capitalist Periphery (Assef Bayat). NILS provided me with a wonderful opportunity to do something that would later be called blogging. I recovered my journalistic skills. The 'fast and dirty' principle permitted publication of anything that seemed relevant: original articles, reproduced material, leaflets and advertisements (one whole issue consisted of ads!).<sup>39</sup>

The newsletter was appreciated internationally, particularly in South Africa. Many years later, my first South African labour studies contact, Eddie Webster, recalled that by the late-1970s, the new labour studies had 'reached the status of a new paradigm', adding

The last Newsletter was Numbers 42-3 in July-December 1989. They are an extraordinarily rich and informative collection ... consisting of reviews, publication news, audio-visual aids, research resources, events, organisations, projects and periodicals over the ten-year period ... when the new paradigm was arguably at its most influential. (Webster 2004:267).

Amusingly, the newsletter was also appreciated by the decidedly non-radical Henk Thomas, who suggested that it might become a publication of the labour studies group. But this was definitely a Compromise Too Far for me. The newsletter was mine, it was dissident, it was subversive and even emancipatory. It was *me*. There was simply no way it was going to be incorporated into any Dutch polder model, whether at the level of the programme, the Institute, the Netherlands or internationally. Unfortunately, my intransigence here and elsewhere, and my junior status relative to my colleagues, meant I was painting myself into an ever-smaller corner within Labour Studies at the ISS. But what I did regret was that I never responded to a Master's thesis proposal from one of Eddie Webster's

students. With Eddie's evident encouragement he had wanted to do this on NILS. I must have been on the edge of burnout (see below), to have turned down a rather professional research outline that would have at least provided some academic evidence of the life and times of the Newsletter.

I sent many issues of NILS out on an exchange basis, as a result of which I received 50-100 publications, many of them substantial journals. When the ISS moved to a former hotel, between The Hague and its seaside resort of Scheveningen, I got a large if shabby room, again in an annex. This gradually became a sizable documentation centre. We benefited, moreover, from numerous subscriptions, either directly or through journal subscription agencies. It had never occurred to me that subscriptions meant money up front. The newsletter actually made money! Indeed, it is the only political project I have *ever* carried out that made a profit. When it, or I, suffered final burnout, at the end of the 1980s, we (or I) actually had one or two thousand guilders in the account. This trickled away over the years, partially subsidising the trip to Latin America of Jay Naidoo, sometime General Secretary of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FoSATU).

It turned out that NILS was actually riding the tail of a wave increasingly threatened by the new one of palaeo-liberalism. Confronted by this there was a general retreat by the traditional unions, left labour academics and even the alternative international labour solidarity projects. Thus, Robin tried to launch an international labour studies series with Zed Press in London. Several excellent books appeared with Zed (Cohen 1991, Bayat 1987, 1991, Munck 1988, 2002). But the series – and the 'purposeful and determined' working-class action – hardly took off into self-sustaining growth. TIE in Amsterdam abandoned its shopfloor networking and its brilliant publications, lost its previously high profile, eventually declining into a projects office for various national or regional TIEs. By the end of the 1980s, many of the major internationalist projects had, like NILS, either died, or declined, or made their peace with the international union bureaucracies they had begun by challenging. The experience and the effort were nonetheless highly educative. It led me, in any case, toward a rethinking of internationalism and to the role of communications – including my little bulletin – in relation to this.

Actually, it now occurs to me, the decline of radicalism in international or third world labour studies was only part of the decline of radicalism in development studies. Within the Institute, the somewhat amorphous left was seriously running out of puff; or running out of serious puff (one member went from Maoism to New-Ageism without abandoning his enthusiasm, or fanaticism). The left was not pushed. Nor did it jump. But, as 'peasant' or 'cultural' revolutions resulted in increasingly authoritarian states, as the radical-nationalist states were replaced by military regimes, as the revolutionary states turned into conservative ones, the left in the Institute simply lost its self-confidence. What was left of this was, I thought, in Women and Development. But in a feminist seminar, around 1990, I think it was my Indian colleague and friend, Amrita Chhachhi, who said, the feminist utopia was in decline. 'All we have left', she said, 'is events like these'. 'That' I said, 'is not utopia. That is euphoria'. I did not actually think utopianism was dead, even if it needed reinvention. What, however, she was experiencing in women's studies, and I in labour studies, and the Institute in development studies, was not confined to feminism, to socialism, to third-worldism, or the Netherlands. The same process was occurring in development studies in, for example, the UK (Kothari 2005). I was not aware of this at the time. Partly, I guess, because I was starting a new career at the Institute.

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<sup>1</sup> I am eternally grateful to a Dutch former colleague at the Institute who, on reading a draft of this chapter, found it interesting but somewhat 'sour'. To which I cutely responded that I had hoped, rather, that it was simply 'tart'. I am not sure whether a conventional dictionary or the all-powerful Wikipedia would agree with the distinction in my mind. But I suppose I was thinking – if I was really

thinking at that moment – of the difference between the taste of, say, sour milk and an apple tart. I decided, in any case, not to sweeten this chapter up.

<sup>2</sup> I here paraphrase the title of the brilliant book by Simon Schama (1997), *An Embarrassment of Riches*. This is about another problematic excess of the Dutch, though during their Golden rather than their Welfare Age.

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan\\_Pronk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Pronk)

<sup>4</sup> It did not, at that time, occur to me that this friendliness might not be extended to or experienced by non-whites.

<sup>5</sup> Annie is memorialised in the novel of her daughter, Ruthie's niece, the multi-talented Chaja Polak (2004). To my mind, this is the best of Chaja's several novels and it is much to my regret that it has not been translated into English. The book is dedicated to Chaja's father who died in a Nazi concentration camp and to Annie who lived a full life till 2001.

<sup>6</sup> [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesische\\_onafhankelijkheidsstrijd](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesische_onafhankelijkheidsstrijd) (in Dutch).

<sup>7</sup> I have to here mention the memoirs of my friend and colleague, Ken Post. Ken was professor of politics at the ISS most of the time I was there. Ken, born in a working-class family in South-East England, was a brilliant kid who got a scholarship to Cambridge, at the normal age, whereas I was a middle-class London Jew who got into Oxford, late, and via the working-class backdoor of Ruskin College. Ken wrote his memoirs, at my suggestion, while I was writing mine. As a couple of the Institute's loud-mouthed Marxists, our ISS lives and attitudes inevitably overlap. They also largely complement each other. And differ. So I feel inclined to make use of Ken's memories of the ISS only where they correct mine, whilst leaving any compare-and-contrast exercise to our putative readers. Insofar as in both his case and mine we are speaking of drafts, it is both difficult and unnecessary, I think, to give chapter or verse. But I do recognise my debt to him, especially since his more systematic production, use of archives and memory, have aided my more erratic ones. Ken will, nonetheless, reappear in a later footnote.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.iss.nl/About-ISS/History/Egbert-de-Vries/>. This blindly positive assessment of an agent of Dutch imperialism could and should be compared with the account of the Dutch in Indonesia by Tariq Ali (2002, Ch. 24), which provides body counts of various colonial massacres, before and during the period that de Vries was 'developing' the country.

<sup>9</sup> Reference here is to Rudyard Kipling's earlier-mentioned poem, 'The White Man's Burden' (Kipling 1899). Of this it has been said that it

... presents a Eurocentric view of the world, in which non-European cultures are seen as childlike and demonic. This view proposes that white people consequently have an obligation to rule over, and encourage the cultural development of, people from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds until they can take their place in the world by fully adopting Western ways. The term 'the white man's burden' can be interpreted simply as racist, or taken as a metaphor for a condescending view of non-Western ... culture and economic traditions, identified as a sense of European ascendancy which has been called 'cultural imperialism'. A parallel can also be drawn with the philanthropic view, common in Kipling's formative years, that the rich have a moral duty and obligation to help the poor 'better' themselves whether the poor want the help or not. <http://www.answers.com/topic/the-white-man-s-burden>

I guess that the Institute leaned more to the philanthropic end of this devastating spectrum. But this sense of obligation was, of course, enthusiastically taken upon themselves by the students, who were mostly going home to carry the non-white, and sometimes non-man's, burden.

<sup>10</sup> Gerrit's work was emblematic, with his original thesis being popularised in a Latin America series edited by Richard Gott, under the title of 'Peasant Rebellion' (Huizer 1972, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> Both as a diploma and, later, a master's programme, this had repeatedly changing names. If I call it Labour and Development, this is because it always subordinated labour to some rarely questioned process of development.

<sup>12</sup> Well, maybe not for ever, but still going in the Netherlands over thirty years later. There has been, thus, a state-promoted 'civil-society' project, The Third Chamber, meant to endorse and promote the faith:

The Third Chamber is a shadow parliament in the Netherlands for 120 Dutch nationals and 30 representatives from developing countries. It deals with international development. The members work on proposals to improve international cooperation and they discuss with Dutch politicians. In addition, members of The Third Chamber work to inform the Dutch public about all aspects of development cooperation. [http://dederdekamer.org/2.10\\_watisdederdekamer.php](http://dederdekamer.org/2.10_watisdederdekamer.php).

- 13 Meeting Jeff at a labour history conference after we had both retired from the ISS, he greeted those in the bar with the words, 'I want to have an argument with someone!'. I said, 'Sorry, Jeff, no takers'. He then remarked that I had mellowed with age. 'But you haven't', I responded. 'No', said Jeff, 'I haven't'.
- 14 <http://www.just-solutions-net.com/people.php>
- 15 Short-term contracts, for one or two years, were commonly given to foreign academics. They were also subject to termination, which Ken Post reveals as certainly political:
- The Rector had a list of four subversives who he wanted out of the ISS, namely Archie Mafeje, Ernest Feder, Peter Waterman and myself. Peter and I as targets had a certain logic, since we were openly Marxist, but Archie's Trotskyist past had long been that and Ernest was a kind of Latin American populist and moreover mildmannered, whereas Archie could be cutting if he wished. (For our part, Peter and I were not always marked by sweetness and light.) Anyway, the rectorial tactics were to harass us enough through the short-contract device to push us over the resignation edge. This eventually worked with Ernest and Archie, who were so disillusioned with the ISS that even better contract terms did not reconcile them. (Cited Ross 2011)
- Ken is here referring to a one-year Acting Rector, formerly involved in Dutch colonial Indonesia, C.A.O. van Nieuwenhuize. I certainly remember the fear he installed in me at that time. He must have sharpened these skills on colonised Indonesians.
- 16 Eschatology: 'a part of theology and philosophy concerned with the final events in the history of the world or the ultimate destiny of human kind .... In many religions, the end of the world is a future event prophesied in sacred texts or folklore. More broadly, eschatology may encompass related concepts such as the Messiah or Messianic Age, the afterlife, and the soul .... Most Western monotheistic religions have doctrines claiming that "chosen" or "worthy" members of the one true faith will be "spared" or "delivered" from the coming judgment and wrath of God. They will be ushered into paradise either before, during, or after it depending upon the end-time scenario to which they hold'. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eschatology>. Quite.
- 17 Giovanni, the more-academic of the two, died in 2009 [http://www.theguardian.com/education/2009/oct/08/giovanni-arrighi-  
obituary](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2009/oct/08/giovanni-arrighi-obituary). John, the more-activist one, is still alive and kicking [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_S.\\_Saul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_S._Saul). He has also written of his own internationalist itinerary! See <http://www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=22047> and Chapter 7, Footnote 6.
- 18 I am not sure whether I am more amused, impressed or depressed about the continued existence of labour aristocracy theory 30 years later, sometimes in quite sophisticated form. Despite the sophistication, it serves the same determinist and therefore nefarious function (Strauss 2005).
- 19 I was, however, even more shocked by academic colleagues who did attend such conferences, financed by the ISS, but without any conference paper or any kind of Institute report-back.
- 20 Foszia was carrying with her a paper on, I think, class and nation, to be presented at some academic conference in the UK. This referred in passing, somewhere, to the Georgian specialist on the national question, Josip Djugashvili. What I knew but, apparently, Apartheid's clumsy thought police did not, was that this was Joseph Stalin. Later, it occurred to me that the actual author of the paper might have been Rick Turner, then under a banning order.
- 21 My paper was concerned with the necessity of moving from trade union to working-class internationalism (Waterman 1979c). For a more extensive and sophisticated approach to the complex question of international solidarity with South African trade unions, see Roger Southall (1995) and my review of this (Waterman 1998b).
- 22 It also turned up as a source in a policy document of the South African trade union centre, COSATU, in 2006! Not that anything in the document related much to what was in our book, but ....
- 23 <http://www.wcml.org.uk/holdings/cisreports.htm>
- 24 Richard, whom I remember from Nuffield College, Oxford, in the early 1960s, became the doyen of British Marxist trade union studies and industrial relations, whilst concentrating on Europe and being extremely cautious about anything outside this world area. After retirement from the London School of Economics, he was a subject of and contributor to a critical *festschrift*, His own contribution and response to this was entitled 'Will the Real Richard Hyman please stand up'. Insofar as the relevant journal, *Capital and Class*, had at some time become itself a victim of neo-liberal globalisation, selling out to the Sage publishing multinational, this no doubt fascinating issue will have to be pirated before most of us can have access to it.

- 25 The Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (FNV) came into existence around 1980 with the unification of the previously existing Social Democratic and Catholic union federations. The Protestant federation remained and remains outside. A Communist organisation, with some strength after the Second World War, had faded by the time I came to the Netherlands. My contacts were exclusively with, first, the Social-Democratic federation and then with the merged one. This was also, of course, social-democratic, but then maybe without capitals.
- 26 A Potemkin Village is, in Russian history or myth, a facade created by General Potemkin, in the hope or expectation that the visiting Queen Catherine (his lover?) would not look at the real one behind. Arvind *had* looked behind, and found a man guarding a parking lot full of trucks which had been used to deliver a crowd of paid villagers, brought in to impress the foreign visitors. Perhaps, given the funding by Dutch development aid, this one should be called a Pronkian Village?
- 27 I note, however, on reading these texts today, that ‘religion’ does not figure under ‘consciousness’ (nor ‘women’, who are permitted a distinct consciousness) outside ‘class’.
- 28 Well, not exactly. In 2012 I received an issue of *The Broker*, a suitably financial-capitalist name for a magazine funded by the Dutch development establishment. Within it one can find the kind of contradictions being discussed that I was teaching in the 1980s. This issue did not, however, reach the conclusions that I had twenty to thirty years earlier: the necessity to move from a discourse and practice of top-down, North-South, development aid to one of global solidarity.
- 29 <http://www.global-labour-university.org/index.htm>. Having twice met up with the GLU staff and students, in Germany and South Africa, I have to say that it has been open to radical labour studies and that it turns out rather well qualified graduates. In 2012 there started up a labour, social movements and development course at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London <http://www.soas.ac.uk/development/programmes/msc-labour-social-movements-and-development/>. Insofar as the German and UK operations have taken off whilst labour studies at the ISS turned into ‘work and employment’, this provides further evidence of the lack of interest in social movements at the ISS.
- 30 Those expelled from paradise are called ‘fallen angels’, and (as Wikipedia tells us [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fallen\\_angel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fallen_angel)) the most common cause for this is ‘pride’. Wikipedia, however, does not make clear what they *do* down there amongst the humans, whilst awaiting the Day of Judgement. That they are eventually told to go to hell, seems to me a little over the top. Well, perhaps, below the belt. If fallen angels expect this fate, then one would imagine that, being amongst humans, they would be engaging in all kinds of ungodly activities. This was my option.
- 31 She was 97 when she eventually died. She was a resilient old bird, repeatedly reinventing herself. And much appreciated by most of the feminists who followed her at the Institute, as witnessed by these obits.
- 32 Arvind died, following a stroke in Schiphol Airport, in hospital in Amsterdam. I tried, in some kind of obituary, to return to him the gesture he had made toward me many years before (Waterman 2002c).
- 33 Castaneda was a phenomenon more of California in the 1970s than The Hague of the 1980s. I learnt about him from a brilliant exposée, the author of which was an admirer of this ultimate academic con-man, who had invented his sources and synthesised (out of various Latin American and Oriental sources) a philosophy of tremendous appeal, particularly for kids seeking the quickest way out of their parents’ reality. I don’t remember the name of the author but I did give the book to Danny, who, evidently inheriting certain intellectual capacities and sceptical attitudes, was able to put Castaneda aside – if only to later pursue, and study, other psychedelics ...
- 34 Danny’s day job, 2014, is that of a locksmith – actually, of course, an *unlock*smith. His vocation, however, is a major study of entheogenic halucinogenics, of which ‘entheogenic’ I translate for myself as ‘pre- or non-capitalist’. See <http://www.amazon.com/Entheogens-Society-Law-Consciousness-Responsibility/dp/190864561X>. Tamara is the owner-manager of Dishy, an espresso bar, the coffee of which I can strongly recommend. Others also, <http://espressos.nl/den-haag/dishy-espressobar/>. And they are both, in their very different ways, looking after their mother, Ruthie, who is suffering from advanced Parkinsons. Tamara also has two grown-up kids. Somewhat to my surprise, the whole family still lives in The Hague.
- 35 See *Labour, Capital and Society* (2004). LC&S, with which I have been a rather inactive consultative editor since the 1970s, was, I think, both supported and limited by its academic basis. The limitation lay in its orientation toward academia and development studies, rather than toward an international and internationalist labour movement – real or imagined. Compare my own, much-shorter-lived, newsletter.

<sup>36</sup> Hoby Spalding and I soon parted company since he was wedded to dependency theory and thirdworldism, whereas I was exploring a more holistic worldview and labour internationalism. His view of the matter is clearly expressed in Erickson, Peppe and Spalding (1980), which denies any contradiction between dependency theory and working-class history.

<sup>38</sup> It has proven useful in writing this chapter. Kim, moreover, caught from NILS the bibliography bug, now producing his own one on contemporary labour issues <http://faculty.pnc.edu/kscipes/LaborBib.htm> #SUBJECT\_LISTINGS

<sup>39</sup> This gives rise, in at least my mind, to the question, ‘Whatever Happened to ...?’. Many of them became professors, often in labour-related areas. Briefly, Paschal Mihyo became a professor but adjusted to the new academic realism, Isa Baud is a professor of development studies, Anneke van Luijken is still coordinating IRENE (the International Restructuring Education Network Europe), Arvind Das remained on the left and retained an interest in labour but died young, Robin has remained on the left and retained an interest in global social movements, Celia Mather became an editor of *International Labour Reports* and is a respected freelance writer and consultant on international labour issues, Gunder Frank and Martha remained respected figures of the intellectual left, but are now, regrettably, both dead, Roger Southall is a professor in South Africa, and still occasionally writing on labour, Kim Scipes is an academic and a critic of US union foreign policy (Scipes 2010), Assef became the director of an institute of Arabic and Islamic studies in Leiden, and then (when that was economised away) a professor in a US university. He has long had an interest in ‘the Arab street’ – which in 2011 entered the language of TV reporters. Rhoda Reddock, who not only wrote her PhD on women and labour in Trinidad but was a pioneer of women’s studies in the Caribbean, is a professor and a winner of numerous awards. Bearing in mind the tsunami of neo-liberalism, and the numbers who adjusted to the cold academic climate, this is not a bad score sheet.

## CHAPTER 7

# Academic/Activist, 1980s-90s: Being Alternative

*Your research interests hardly coincide with those of the Institute, do they, Peter?*<sup>1</sup>

## **‘Alternative’ Development Strategies**

Whilst either twiddling my thumbs, or suspended by these, at the ISS, I was invited by my Dutch colleagues, Martin Doornbos and Frits Wils, to join a small staff group that was running the politics programme. This went through a series of content- and name-changes, but I remember it best as the ‘Politics of Alternative Development Strategies’ (PADS). I threw myself into this. Indeed, I concentrated all my efforts on it, prepared for some years to be the anchorman or dogsbody, whatever my other colleagues might be doing. This, plus my PhD, ensured both promotion to Senior Lecturer and tenure. It might have been Ken Post or another friendly colleague who said that I would now be able to do in the Institute all those things I hadn’t been able to do without tenure. ‘For better or worse’, I responded, ‘I have already done them’.

In the 1980s the Institute was moving its basic programme form from diploma to master’s programmes, implying a move from courses of nine to 15 months). PADS was one of the last to gain recognition. Most of the work of arguing for this and finding extra staff for the extended programme fell on me. Within the Institute, many staff considered PADS, like Women and Development, ideological or soft (in contrast, of course, to urban planning, rural development and, particularly, economics). I recall one of my colleagues arguing that our politics courses should be spread across the whole Masters’ Programme, rather than being concentrated as we were proposing. ‘But’, he said, ‘I have to admit that you do get the best students’. I apologised for this shortcoming and promised to try to get worse students in the future. I don’t think we necessarily did get the best students, but they were encouraged to be critical and vocal. One year, PADS students actually proposed for the student body, Scholas, a ‘rainbow coalition’, instead of the customary regional/ethnic wheeling and dealing. I was impressed. In making our case for PADS as a Master’s, I proposed we should play hard ball with our soft ball. Here I was placing bets on the Dutch development creed and mafia. Making a hard case for a soft option was about as radical as I got within administrative matters at the Institute. The strategy seemed to work. Some years later I discovered – quite by chance – that PADS was the *most successful programme* in both recruitment and financial terms (externally-funded students). I was embarrassed (though not to excess) for a certain amount of time (small). My intention had been to create an *alternative* programme, not a *successful* one.

Students entering this programme would routinely ask what ‘alternative’ meant in the name of our programme, ‘Politics of Alternative Development Strategies’. It is understandable that they wanted it to be like, well, ‘Reformist’ or ‘Revolutionary’ or that there would at least be a standard textbook. Whilst I had a definite anti-capitalist definition of my own, I would tell them diplomatically that its meaning was something they would have to work out for themselves. This they naturally found unsatisfactory. The word was, as far as I was concerned, an opportune one which allowed each of those

teaching to do whatever they wanted. It enabled me to avoid ideological confrontation, of which I had had more than enough in Labour Studies. It also enabled me to go my merry way. 'Alternative', in any case, had become an increasingly popular concept for something other than that which was represented internationally by either of the two hegemonies and their associated ideologies. Or, for that matter, that which was common to both of them. Indeed, it may have been with the work of the East German dissident and environmentalist, Rudolf Bahro (1978), that the concept first caught my eye. Later, there appeared a book by John Friedman (1992) on the politics of alternative development, which, perhaps, best encapsulated the orientation of PADS. Friedman also used the word 'empowerment', another keyword in my teaching lexicon at that time. But maybe 'alternative' applied best to our participants, most of whom came from the world of NGOs. Within PADS, I came to offer two main courses, one on 'social movements, national and transnational' (one picky colleague having a problem with 'international'), and one on 'alternative communication and culture'.

The students in the politics programme were rather more interesting than the labour ones, most of them being from an area coming to be known as 'civil society'. This meant nongovernmental organisations, primarily, although we also got people from social movements and from academia. This did not mean, in the 1980s, that the PADS students were particularly radical. When a new student from East Africa asked what a social movement was, I asked whether there were none in his country. 'No', he said, 'Our government doesn't allow them.' I suggested that something government banned was a useful initial understanding of what a social movement was – at least in Africa.

From around the mid-1980s, fortunately, there was developing a European literature on 'new social movements' (most provocatively Melucci 1989). Indeed, this was even reproduced in the Netherlands to some extent. Obligated to read Melucci and his school for teaching purposes, I at last had something substantial, beyond Marxism, to refer to. Out of the encounter between Marxism and NSM theory came my first paper on 'social movement unionism' (eventually published as Waterman 1993a). During the 1980s, also, we began to see a new literature on 'civil society' and later on 'global civil society'. This helped me, again, to move from the internationalism of labour to the new internationalism(s) (Waterman 1988a), and later to the notion of the new global solidarity (Waterman 1993b).

My communications and culture course was even more fun since this was an entirely new area to me. Not, perhaps, *entirely* new insofar as I had been a journalist, had been always fascinated by the media, and had long been part of a particular international socialist culture. But teaching and researching this required me to conceptualise 'alternative international communication'. A really helpful, open and friendly colleague here was Cees Hamelink, sometime President of the International Association of Mass Communication Research (IAMCR). Cees and the IAMCR itself, had been heavily engaged with the 'New World Information and Communication Order' (NWICO). The IAMCR was the left or critical communications association, sympathetic to dependency theory, and therefore to UNESCO. This was a period in which the UN had been busy with what I later disparaged as the 'New International This That and the Other Order'. I was hoping, as usual, to find that someone had done my theory for me. When I asked Cees, he pointed me toward NWICO. But when he explained this to me, I said, well, I was not really excited about Mrs Gandhi being able to communicate with General Pinochet without going via Washington. Cees said one had to get national control of the media from the core capitalist world before one could democratise it. I felt that once there was national (i.e. state) control of the media – something favoured by the Soviet bloc in the UN – we could forget about democratic access and control. Fortunately, a student of Cees was himself

doing something more radical (Stangelaar 1982). He contributed to what I think was my last little seminar and self-published collection (Waterman 1986). Teaching the course was a whole education for me. It also brought me in contact with the whole world of radical or alternative communicators, particularly with the US-based Union for Democratic Communication.<sup>2</sup> Of course, I was not only teaching the subject but also researching it, producing over the years a series of papers, most of them on international labour communication. A number were published in the UDC bulletin or by UDC colleagues.

## **From Social Movement Unionism to the New Internationalisms**

During these decades I was to switch back and forth in my research and writing between ‘the new internationalisms’ and ‘global solidarity communications and culture’. This involved work on: the reception and transmission of international labour information in Peru; on a Barcelona-based waterfront network of European dockers, on socialist and feminist communications internationalism in South Africa, as well as critique of the computer communication experiences of the shopfloor internationalists themselves. Most of these pieces of work were first published in the *Working Papers* series of the Institute.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, I was for some years the most energetic contributor to this series. Most of the outcome was published in full or in part in either academic or political journals. I did not produce at this time another self-authored, or even a (co-)edited, book, or a journal special issue, until 1998. I am not quite sure why this was so. In part I was recovering from my mid-life crisis. In part I was pre-occupied with NILS. But I was also, obviously, busy with my new teaching programme, and I put some effort into ‘alternative labour internationalism’ projects with others. Obviously there was an overlap between my academic and political activities. Or, to put it another way, my academic activities were fuelling my political ones – both intellectually and financially.

In the 1980s I also became quite involved in international labour communication projects in the UK. These seemed to be taking off as those in the Netherlands were fading out. Or maybe it was simply that I was more at home with the left culture in the UK than that in the Netherlands.

There were various such projects shaping up at this time. There were the efforts of Don Thomson within and beyond War on Want in London. WoW, rather like X minus Y in the Netherlands, was the brainchild of a Social Democratic politician, in this case Harold Wilson, onetime Prime Minister of the UK. In the 1970s Don was doing international labour education and research work for WoW. Together with an American, Rodney Larsen, he wrote the classic British text on ‘trade union imperialism’ (Thomson and Larsen 1978). It was the first British publication criticising the dominant West European union orientation toward trade unions in the Third World. They were an odd couple. Don was a sweetie, an English working-class union activist, but so chaotic as to be difficult to work with. Rodney was an American adventurer coming out of the conspiratorial wing of the anti-Vietnam War movement, and not a person to inspire confidence.<sup>4</sup> They stayed together at my place in The Hague whilst on tour in Western Europe, digging up dirt for their book. I gave them a lot of time, advice, information, and documentation on the activities of the West European and US unions in Nigeria. Don and Rodney both shook and stirred this and eventually produced a book. It lacked in both intellectual sophistication and editorial qualities. It nonetheless went off like a small bomb in the UK. There was a hostile reaction from the official institutions of labour, and War on Want even had its charity status threatened. In collaboration, I seem to recall, with the Workers Education Association,

Don then attempted to set up an independent project and even a magazine. Given his lack of organisational capacities, this never took off. I was not myself much enchanted with the concept of 'trade union imperialism', which I found an evocative rhetorical pejorative but no adequate explanation for the lack of internationalism even on the North-South axis and in a North-South direction. To start with, it didn't explain the limited nature of internationalism within the North, across the South, or even between neighbouring countries in Latin America.

One project which did take off, and which lasted, operated within the parameters and discourses of official union internationalism and state development aid. This was TUIREG, run by Alan Leather and based, appropriately, at Ruskin College, Oxford, where I had studied and suffered a decade or so earlier (see above, Chapter 3). TUIREG was an operation carried out with extreme caution, and that was not going to raise any hackles in the development aid mafia in the UK. Alan eventually moved on to become Deputy General Secretary of the Public Services International in Geneva. He also wrote a rare and fascinating biographical account of his itinerary in and between the world of development NGOs and inter/national unions (Leather 2005, Waterman 2006).

The UK project that *did* get away was *International Labour Reports*, based first in the middle of Manchester, later in the geographically isolated Northern Labour College. ILR (which ran around 1984-89), was inspired by notions less of trade union imperialism or development cooperation than of solidarity. The magazine was co-founded by Dave Spooner and Stuart Howard, to be joined by Celia Mather. All three were university educated, had backgrounds in the Third World or solidarity with such, and had good relations with a wide range of left union, labour and socialist activists both in Manchester and nationally. ILR was an elastic-band and paper-clip operation run in a shabby office, above an Oxfam or War on Want shop, by a changing team, each taking turns in switching between minimal pay and unemployment benefit. Born with the new social movements, feminism and independent socialism from the 1970s, ILR was, for five years or so, the coordinating principle of the 'new labour internationalism' in Europe – exercising some influence in the USA, Europe and elsewhere. ILR clearly saw itself less as providing a service to, or acting as a pressure group within, the existing inter/national union movement, more as reporting and supporting meaningful solidarity relations with and between workers at company and shopfloor level. This was particularly so for the outstanding militant movements of the moment – in South Africa, Poland, the Philippines and South Korea. However, ILR also covered solidarity activities with and within Western Europe and the USA. I gave the new publication such publicity as I could, within NILS but also more widely.

ILR's pathbreaking effort at moving beyond both the discourses of union development cooperation and of trade union imperialism eventually foundered on the customary rocks: no rocks (despite confidential financial backhanders from at least one sympathetic development cooperation agency), high staff turnover, eventual burnout.<sup>5</sup> There were also policy differences between those prominently involved. Stuart was identified with the Maoist-aligned Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) in the Philippines. Dave, with a background in the autonomist Marxist *Big Flame*, was unenchanted with this. However, it seemed to me that, along the way, ILR was losing its autonomy and cutting edge and, in its relationship with the traditional unions, sliding back toward a lobby-and-support role. This all came to a head with my critique of the 'new realism' within ILR, early 1989. Here I was taking on a major piece on internationalism by academic labour specialist John Humphrey and a minor one, on labour communication by computer, by Dave Spooner himself. After criticising the old internationals on many grounds, John nonetheless said:

The advantage of rank and file networks over official union organisations is that they can

more easily establish direct contacts and provide more flexible links between workers, particularly within the same company. But it would be foolish to suggest that they can ever replace the valuable activities of official international bodies. (Humphreys 1988b:22)

And Dave Spooner (taking an implicit swipe at me?) said:

Despite the early enthusiasm for a self-regulating computer network of networks, without hierarchy of access or central organisation, it is becoming clear that there will be no libertarian utopia of global worker communication. The 'new communications media for a new worker internationalism', as it has been termed, is still going to have to be organised, funded and regulated. Nor will it be able to sidestep the established trade union structures and ideologies. (Spooner 1988:27)

In my one-page reply I argued:

It is one thing to recognise the limitations of our own efforts. It is another to concede to traditional unions which are themselves in crisis and moving, in typically contradictory fashion, in a direction we have ourselves mapped out. We need to recognise their influence, financial resources and representativity. We should also dialogue with them (but when will they provide us access to their publications?). But we also need to preserve our own resources: our institutional autonomy, our political integrity and our theoretical/ideological originality. Progressive forces within the traditional trade unions may value these even more than we do! (Waterman 1989:26)

Regretably, this exchange could not continue, since ILR went pear-shaped about one year later ... preceded by NILS. Although other international labour solidarity projects continued, this dual collapse suggested the end of an era of energy, creativity and autonomy. ILR had pioneered in many ways. Amongst these was that it managed to attract the interest of and provide space for a small number of the more open or forward-looking international union officers, such as Dan Gallin, the General Secretary of the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF) and Denis McShane, Communications Officer of the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF). Whatever his disparaging remarks, moreover, ILR editor Dave Spooner had also himself pioneered international labour communications by computer, something which continues to this day (see later chapters and Waterman 2010a). One division, however, that neither NILS or ILR ever really overcame was that between academics and activists. NILS was – whatever its intentions, and whether the ISS knew it or not – ensconced within the academy. And ILR was, to be blunt, anti-intellectual, or at least anti-academic. The intellectual it was anti was mostly – it must be admitted – me. Originally a member of its Editorial Board, it was only when questioning the disappearance of my name from the masthead, that I discovered I had been dispensed with. The rationale for this was that I couldn't attend EB meetings. But when Dave Spooner repeatedly used my academic status to exclude me from alternative computer networks in Europe, it did not require a PhD in rocket science to understand what was going on. It turned out that what ILR wanted of academics was not fundamentally different from what the Dutch FNV wanted, and this was less a dialogical relationship than support. This was what it was getting from John Humphreys, who was willing and able to stuff envelopes as well as write his long two-part piece referred to above. I had no problem with envelope-stuffing, since I had to do it with NILS. But I was beyond envelope-stuffing distance and certainly not prepared to hew to some implicit ILR line.

# Travelling Hopefully

I often enough made fun of leftist searches for the ‘weak link in the capitalist chain’, or the ‘*really* socialist state’, likening them to Christian searchers for the Holy Grail or the Promised Land:

‘It’s South-East Asia!’,

‘No, no, it’s the Fertile Crescent!’,

‘Tanzania!’

‘Tanzania?’

‘Well, alright, then, Central America!’

The weak link customarily turned out to be tough turkey, or to give way to seriously unpromising lands. And what had originally appeared ‘really socialist regimes’ were later often castigated by their initial champions as revolutions betrayed. The Betrayal seemed to become not only inevitable but integral to the concept of The Revolution.<sup>6</sup>

I liked to think of myself as a more sceptical traveller, with a clearer eye, hoping for the best yet prepared for the worst. Apart from my Nigerian adventures, covered in Chapter 5 and 6, I travelled – not necessarily in this order – to Yugoslavia, Poland, Scandinavia, Spain, Latin America, the Philippines and South Africa. Not to speak of that part of Germany previously known as West. Or the UK. The trips customarily gave rise to research and publications, or at least to travel reports. I felt an obligation to the Institute, or to those who had invited and assisted me, or to the readers of NILS, or to a process of global social emancipation (which I was gradually substituting for the Leninists’ repeatedly postponed world socialist revolution).<sup>7</sup> Or perhaps it was the journalist in me, and the availability of my newsletter, or the ISS’s own newsletter, that stimulated me to write my reports.

Eric Hobsbawm (1988) identifies two generations of internationalists, the first being the more-or-less freelance agitators, the second being party or union representatives. I invented a third category, the internationalist communicator or ‘communications internationalist’ (Waterman 1999) and then cast myself in this role. The problem was, and is, that whilst it may be true that no one is a prophet in their own country, that does not necessarily imply that s/he is one in those of other peoples.

## • **Yugoslavia: What if the Communists Come to Power?**

I am here going back, for a moment, to the 1970s because it was while I was still in Labour Studies at the ISS that I started making the first of several reluctant trips to ‘worker self-managed’ Yugoslavia. I have mentioned that two of my Dutch colleagues were heavily engaged with the themes of ‘worker participation and self-management’ (WP&SM) internationally. Indeed, both Gerard Kester and Henk Thomas did their PhDs on this area, they invited international specialists, they got this couple of Yugoslav colleagues to join the Labour Studies programme almost every year, and were hot-gospellers for WP&SM as a – or the – development strategy for the Third World. There was also, therefore, a more-or-less annual study trip to Yugoslavia, which Gerard energetically used for his own research purposes. We would be hosted by our two immensely cautious Yugoslav visitors, at their university department, the Faculty of Politics. I was later given to understand that this was very closely controlled by the Party – there called the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

My reluctance to participate had to do with a certain acquired scepticism about Communist states,

of which Yugoslavia was clearly one – if of a special kind. Whilst Yugoslavia in these years gave the impression of being more democratic, market-orientated, and open to the rest of the world than Czechoslovakia, I could not imagine for one moment that the country was not a Party-State dictatorship, that the unions were in any significant way independent of this, and that self-management was more than a device for managing labour in an increasingly market-dominated system. In many ways, it now occurs to me, Yugoslavia provided a model for the peaceful (more or less) transition from Communism to capitalism that later occurred in most of the Soviet bloc – with ‘self-managed’ Yugoslavia as the most extreme exception. If I had – like my colleagues, Ken Post and Phil Wright (1989) – been myself studying the so-called socialist countries, I would have had more motivation to make such annual pilgrimages. Instead, they were something of a chore, since they also obviously required managing a diverse party of students who tended to treat the field trips as an excursion.

Trips to Yugoslavia, of course, had their compensations, these including food, drink and additions to my collection of fatally-revealing East European jokes. This remains one of my all-time favourites:

It is harvest time in a mountain village of Montenegro. The huts are made of wood, the road is nothing but a grassy, rock-strewn track. A great white stretched Mercedes bumps slowly up the path, preceded by uniformed outriders on BMW motorbikes. The peasants lay down their scythes and rakes, squint and gawk at the strange caravan. The Mercedes halts and out climbs a portly, elderly man in a grey suit bearing a row of medals. He approaches one of the huts and pounds at the door. A tiny little bent old woman, dressed in local costume, peers up at him without recognition. ‘Mother’, says the visitor, ‘it’s me!’ The old lady finally recognises him, hugging him, laughing and crying, ‘My son, my son, finally you’ve come back!’ A pig is slaughtered and roasted, great jugs of wine are set up on a makeshift table. A band assembles itself. Homemade slivovitz is hauled from hidden hoards. After the feast the villagers beg the visitor for a speech. ‘Well’, he says, ‘you remember me leaving the village in ‘41? I was 15 years old and still wet behind the ears. I just couldn’t stand the hunger or the oppression any more. I got my first rifle by clubbing a Nazi soldier to death and only then would they let me fight with the partisans. Before the end of the war I joined the Party. When the new State was set up I was put in charge of wiping out the Fascist and Monarchist counter-revolutionaries in Croatia. I had not one day to rest up from the war. Then they put me in charge of the tourist industry in Dubrovnik. After that I was appointed Minister of Culture for the Federation. Then Ambassador to Egypt. Only now, after 35 or more years of devotion to the cause, am I able to relax a little. I have an apartment in Belgrade. I can travel wherever I want within Yugoslavia at state expense. I’ve got this government car and the outriders. I have a villa on the same island as Tito! And now, finally, I have the time to visit my aged mother and my own native village.’ At this point, the old lady begins to scream and sob, pulling her hair loose and tearing her clothes ‘What’s wrong mother?’, the visitor asks. ‘I’ve got everything I want, and I want you to share it too. ‘ ‘Yes’, says the old lady bitterly, between heartrending sobs, ‘It’s all right now, but what will happen if the Communists come to power?’.

Trying to make the best of a generally less-jokey trip, I sought out whatever intellectual dissidents I could find. I managed to meet up with a couple of these, both connected with the Praxis Group.<sup>8</sup> This was the name of a Zagreb-based international journal, carrying material in Western languages, and it

represented the distinct Yugoslav contribution to international socialism, known as Humanist Marxism. There were, here, connections with a series of international summer schools, with the 1968 student protest movement in Yugoslavia, and a group of dissident Marxist professors at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. During a long, convoluted and devious process, the professors were denounced, spied on and eventually expelled from the League of Communists and the Faculty.<sup>9</sup> However, at the time I met him, one of their most prominent leaders, Mihailo Marković, still had his passport, his gracious suburban apartment, and an international reputation. A couple of days later I was with our students in the infinitely depressing iron and steel centre of Smederovo, on the Danube, some 50km South-East of Belgrade. It was springtime and the surrounding hills were covered with apple-blossom. As for the town itself, the most appealing part might have been our hotel/motel. For the rest, we accompanied the students to a series of slow and formal meetings with the management, works council, the union committee, the municipality, with rural communities. Having previously been a tourist of the revolution in East Europe and Cuba, I had little patience with these.

One morning I played hooky, pretending I was looking after a sick student in the hotel. But, on returning from a nice long breakfast, after the students and my colleagues had gone off by bus, my key was missing from reception. I assumed it had been taken by a cleaner but, on attempting to open my room door, I found it locked, whilst I could clearly hear men's voices in conversation inside. Receiving no response to my pathetic knocking, I got the idea of actually visiting the sick student. I knew that the balconies were interconnected, so stepped easily over onto my own, to view a couple of men with raincoats, hats and briefcases. Since my Serbian was limited to Czech, I tried non-verbal communication, without singular success. I then returned to the room door, whereupon the two men appeared, one mumbled something like *električar* and both disappeared in the general direction of reception. I had, for the first time in my life - at least to my knowledge - had had my accommodation gone over, if not by capitalist plumbers, then by socialist electricians. So much for 'self-managed' Smederevo, today the stamping ground of US Steel.

As for Mihailo Marković, I was to next meet him in 1990, at an anniversary of *Monthly Review*, a long-established and much respected magazine of the US left. Actually, it was in the lift going up to or down from the apartment of my old Marxist friend, Bertell Ollman. Bertell and Paule had promised him accommodation. But I think this must have been offered to the Young Marković, because, by now, the man had turned himself from a prince back into a frog, as court philosopher to the Serbian nationalist, militarist and (later) war criminal, Slobodan Milošević.<sup>10</sup> So much for Humanist Marxism too?

I do not know about the further political development of my other contact, Srđan Vrcan, in Split except that he eventually died, at a ripe old age, in 2006. Like Marković, he was of the resistance generation of independent-minded Marxist intellectuals. And, like him and others, he had fluent English. I think I had seen, possibly amongst the vast archive of material collected by Gerard and Henk, something he had written on the growth of social inequality in socialist Yugoslavia. But maybe he had just been referred to in a paper by someone else. I do recall passing such a paper through to *New Left Review* in London. But the web reveals only an item written by someone else (Vuskovic 1995). What I recall of the argument, in any case, was growing differentials between elite and mass, north and south (with Kosovo worst off), city and countryside. It helped to convince me that socialism (self-managed or not) was less a stage of development beyond capitalism than a parallel, if different, one. Vrcan, in any case, I recall as a charming and sophisticated man. I hope he escaped the awful option chosen by the arrogant Marković.

A couple of years later I was the sole Labour and Development staff member to accompany the students to what turned out to be the Last Field Trip to Yugoslavia. This might have been around 1980, when my status within the programme (self-managed) lay somewhere beneath the permafrost. I had even less motivation to do this trip than previously but, given my delicate position in the programme, there was no alternative. A preparatory trip to Belgrade landed me in a hotel on Terazije, right in the centre of Belgrade, in mid-February. At about 05.30 I was awoken by the smell of the furnaces, burning brown coal, starting up in the surrounding office blocks. It had penetrated even the double windows. Walking along what I thought of as ‘a pavement’, I was cursed by a driver for occupying something he clearly considered ‘a parking space’. Car ownership and traffic jams were growing in Belgrade, whilst public transport was becoming an increasingly inadequate alternative. Yet this leap forward toward the capitalist consumer society was not necessarily matched by a transformation of family relations. Apologising for a temporary absence, one of our two regular young women interpreters explained that she had to go home to prepare lunch for her brother. ‘That’s nice’, I said, assuming this was a schoolchild, ‘How old is he?’ ‘Nineteen’, came the unabashed reply.

During negotiations at the Politics Faculty it was established that we would, this time, be going to the light industrial town of Gornji Milanovac, amongst the rolling springtime mountains 100 kilometers or so south of Belgrade. I was relieved we were moving from the first to the second industrial revolution. And Gornji Milanovac turned out to be the very model of Newgoslavia, producing Nutella chocolate and hazelnut spread (Italian?) and plastified milk cartons (Swedish?), along with the usual complement of schools, hospitals and government offices. Unfortunately – for the Yugoslavs, if not myself – my students that year included a couple of bright and striking young women, one from Slovenia (whose name escapes me, but whom I will call Slavka) and one from Colombia, Ofelia Gómez.<sup>11</sup> They happened to also be socialists, feminists and feisty. Yugoslavia was, in the 1980s, well used to Westerners, to Liberal Democrats, to Stalinists, to Social Democrats, to the Third World. What it was not accustomed to was either libertarian socialists or feminists, particularly when combined and plural – and even more particularly when one of them came from Slovenia. These two carried out their conventional student field trip requirements. But, with my obvious encouragement, they went beyond the call of duty, counting heads at appointments and asking about the percentage of women in the leaderships of the League of Communists, the management, the Workers Council and the Trade Unions of each institution we visited. This was all particularly stressful for the Bosnian guide/translator and minder the Faculty had provided us with, and whom I will call Ibrahim. He was a perfectly nice guy, even if his ‘You Ofelia, Me Hamlet’ jokes fell a little flat.

The local authorities were not charmed by the repeated challenges to their political credentials, challenges to which they also had no answers. On our last day in Gornji Milanovac we returned to our hotel to find that the laundry outhouse was on fire and we could not return to our rooms. Watching the incompetent attempts of hotel staff to deal with the smoke and flames, I was reminded of the Czech movie by the young Miloš Forman (known in English as ‘The Fireman’s Ball’). At one moment in this 1967 movie – which contributed to the cultural subversion of the Communist regime – an aged farmer is shivering in his underwear as the firemen make pathetic attempts to douse the fire in his house. Observing his plight, the firemen put him in a chair and move him closer to the flames.

No one in Gornji Milanovac moved us closer to the flames. But when we were permitted back into the hotel, Slavka and Ofelia discovered that their room had been entered – by more electricians? – and Slavka’s luggage had been either searched or simply turned upside down. Moreover, as they had left

their room, Slavka had been taken aside to be questioned by the curiously-named ‘competent authorities’. As Ofelia was telling us all this, our two young Serbian women interpreters were being escorted, stony-faced, from the hotel, to be shortly followed by Slavka, likewise escorted, likewise stony-faced.

I was so angered at what had happened, and so busy remonstrating with Ibrahim that it was not until we were back in Belgrade that the suspicion, and then the certainty, struck me: the competent authorities had actually set the outhouse on fire so that they could turn over Slavka’s luggage undisturbed! This was clearly a Firemen’s Balls-Up, insofar as they then made no attempt to disguise their operation. And, indeed, it seems likely that they had left the evidence of their break-in there in order to intimidate Slavka.

Poor Ibrahim, who received, full frontally, all the frustration and anger I had felt but never been able to publicly express in Czechoslovakia. What this amounted to was my demand to meet the Dean of the Faculty of Politics, carrying a letter of protest, to be delivered to the Dutch Embassy and copied to the Rector of the Institute of Social Studies. My various proposed actions were discussed first with the ISS student group, who agreed, with varying degrees of conviction. One disagreement, from a Ugandan student, was that the two feminists had been provoking the Yugoslavs with their questions and challenges, and that, in any case, Slavka ‘belonged’ to Yugoslavia. I responded that I didn’t care what nationality she had, she was one of my students, one of his colleagues and ‘belonged’ to the ISS.

The next morning, as I was coming down from my high horse and high dudgeon, I was ushered into the presence of the Dean of the ... umm? ... competent faculty? Rather than being the kind of party apparatchik I had been accustomed to in Czecho, however, this was a former Yugoslav diplomat, clearly accustomed to bringing enraged foreigners down from whatever heights of self-righteousness they had elevated themselves to. Reading my protest letter one sentence at a time, he smiled apologetically, shook his head at the scandalous behaviour of the provincial authorities and made me an offer, in excellent English: ‘Doctor Waterman, I apologise on behalf of my nation and countrymen. If I assure you that I will take this matter up immediately, and at the highest level, would you be prepared to withdraw this letter and action?’

I had, by this time, began to wonder whether either the Dutch Embassy or the ISS would not prefer to hold me responsible for the behaviour of my students, to consider my own protest activity excessive, rather than to disturb whatever relationship they might have with Yugoslavia as a state or the Faculty as a partner. I thanked him, rather too effusively, and – without even asking him for anything in writing – returned to the hotel and thence to the Netherlands. I reported, of course, to the Institute, which, as far as I can recall, set in place enquiries concerning the missing Slavka. Meeting me in a corridor, the Rector, Louis Emmerij, laughed off my behaviour from on high (he was overbearing physically as well as otherwise). A week or so later, Slavka returned. She had been questioned by the competent federal authorities in Belgrade, and sent back to Ljubljana. There she had spoken to a friend working for her own competent national authorities in Slovenia. They had put the matter down to the backwardness of their opposite numbers in Serbia and dispatched her back to finish her course in The Hague.

One further mystery remained unsolved. High on the drama I was playing out in Belgrade, I had begun, in our hotel, to record the events in diary form. The notes were extensive, and set out in a small loose-leaf folder I always kept at hand. I think it was already on the way to the airport that I noted it was missing. I was sure I had had it by my side, sitting in reception in the Hotel. I was extremely frustrated since I had been planning to write a play, with myself obviously in the main role, entitled

something like 'A Socialist Lesson', or 'A Lesson in Socialism' ... Enquiries with the Belgrade hotel and faculty did not, of course, turn up any notebook. I tried to reconstruct the story at home. But – fortunately for the art of drama and the reputation of Communist Yugoslavia - the play never came into existence. Given what was to happen in, or to, Yugoslavia, a decade later, I cannot but wonder whether I had been granted a glimpse of something lying under or behind the rituals of state-approved worker self-managed socialism.

## • **India: Straws and Whirlwinds**

I visited India in 1980 and 1981, in the hope of setting up a research project on 'The Trade Unions and the Labouring Poor' (see above, Chapter 6). In 1980 I travelled extensively at least in the Northern part of the sub-continent. In Africa, I had been confronted, on the one hand, by attempts to reproduce urban industrial Modernisation (Capitalist or Socialist, Liberal or Communist, Western or Eastern) and, on the other hand, with what appeared to be Rural, Traditional, Muslim or Animist society. In India I was immediately aware of a highly-developed civilisation, culture, community – indeed a wide variety of such. This was like being on Mars. I was casting around for both for bearings and ways of relating this world to my own more familiar one. India had been a point of crucial reference to the British left when I was a child, and even in the 1950s you could still see faded CP slogans on bridges and walls: 'Quit India Now'. Also, of course, we Communists had special access to India through the writings of the half-Indian Rajani Palme Dutt. Perhaps we were unable to deal with the complexities of Nehru's India. But, in any case, it had gradually disappeared from our radar screen, possibly replaced by the apparently simpler contradictions of struggles in Africa.

My trip had been organised by my colleague and friend Arvind Das, then working at a very-Nehruvian institute, the Public Enterprises Centre for Continuing Education. Ostensibly providing services for India's then-humungous state sector, it was simultaneously supporting work on unions, social movements and participatory action research. Arvind had found me an outstanding guide, chubby, charming, grass-smoking former 'Naxalite', the Bengali Sanjay Mitra. 'Naxalite', in India, customarily means a Maoist, supporting guerilla warfare. But Sanjay, despite his preferential option for the poor, had never borne or favoured arms. Like so many of his generation, he had abandoned – or been obliged to abandon – his technical college studies and had then wandered, like a Gandhi without a staff, through West Bengal and neighbouring states, involving himself in the various protest movements of the 1970s. Along the way he had been arrested, imprisoned, tortured. It had taken his widowed mother's jewelry to support or release him. Arvind had warned me, 'Don't give Sanjay cash, he will only give it away. Give him a camera. Maybe, as he says, he can make a living with it' (he didn't or couldn't).

In a two-three week tour I went to crumbling and slum-ridden Calcutta, to the Tata Iron and Steel company town of Jamshedpur, to the *adivasi* (tribal) and mafia-ridden mining town of Dhanbad, to the megalopolis, Bombay (now Mumbai) and Poona, to Jaipur in semi-desert Rajasthan, and then to the brick-kilns, illegally employing bonded labour, in Mehrauli, 20 km from the parliament in New Delhi. In each case I visited factories, workshops, mines or other workplaces. I met shopfloor union and other labour organisers, independent socialist journalists, Marxist theorists, national and even international officers of the West European-based union internationals.

In a Calcutta evidently competing with Lagos for the prize of Hellhole of the Universe, I stayed with Sanjay in the one or two rooms of his mother in a rundown backstreet mansion occupied by an

extended family of Mitras. Indeed, I shared the one bed (or wooden platform) with him and her. I didn't get too much sleep, even though it was Sanjay I was sleeping next to. The mosquito net appeared to be operating as a mosquito cage. Next day Sanjay's tiny wizened mother conjured up an incredible meal whilst squatting over a charcoal stove in a corridor kitchen shared with others. Sanjay managed to get me a brief appointment with a Marxist Minister I had mistakenly thought had been a visitor to the ISS. The minister sat behind a huge desk, between a large portrait of Karl Marx and an equally-sized reproduction of the Indian Constitution. He was not amused by my mistake and we rapidly found ourselves outside on the pavement. Sanjay was disgusted by the minister's behaviour and embarrassed on my account. 'What', he burst out, referring to the minister's two guardian angels, 'is the meaning of *that!*' I suggested 'Marx, Thesis; Constitution, Antithesis; Minister, Synthesis?' At another extreme of a wide left spectrum was Timur Basu, with his shoestring monthly, *Frontier*. Timur was an independent left Marxist who reported on labour and other social protests under and sometimes against the dominant Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM). This was apparently still in existence in the 1990s.

In Bombay I met Krishna Raj, the editor of that extraordinary and essential publication, *Economic and Political Weekly*, a combination, I thought, of the UK's *Economist* and its *New Left Review*. It was certainly read both by members of the Indian elite and revolutionaries trying to overthrow them. In Bombay I was hosted by independent labour and women's organiser, Chhaya Datar, whose amiable and supportive husband was a manager in one of India's major industrial houses (conglomerates).<sup>12</sup> She even introduced me to an Indian Jewish socialist and union organiser, living in a slum, like one of his early-twentieth century opposite numbers in London's East End! In Bombay, too, I met the intense Jairus Banaji and his wife Rohini Hensman (daughter of a veteran Ceylonese revolutionary), both of them engaged in labour-support activities of the kind being carried out by independent socialist intellectuals worldwide (Lines 2006). Jairus, a brilliant Classics (i.e. Greek and Latin) graduate of Oxford, had an international reputation for his contribution to a long-running debate on the mode of production (Foster-Carter 1978). Arvind, inclining more toward a populist Marxism, had given me to expect an Indian Savonarola. Jairus, the leading independent Indian Trotskyist intellectual of his generation, arranged for a colleague to pick me up from somewhere in the city centre. I felt I was being not so much welcomed as interrogated, for what would later be called 'political correctness'. Tongue firmly in cheek, I responded – in apparently appropriate manner – to his probing questions, and off we went to the modest suburban apartment of Jairus and Rohini, with a few bottles of beer under our arms. I do not recall whether or not they had then created their Union Research Group. But, thirty or more years later it still seemed to exist, and Rohini is an internationally-known labour researcher and activist (Hensman 2006, 2010), with whom I occasionally continue to have exchanges. Other impressive people I met in Bombay were the independent Marxist activist, Sandeep Pendse, who I recall primarily as a journalist, and Bharat Patankar, a medical doctor who – like a dozen other professionals I met in India – had abandoned his career to work with workers. It was Bharat who insisted that whilst generalising about the working class we were forgetting 'the working-class human-being'. Bharat was married to Gail Omvedt, an American of the 1968 generation, who I did not meet at this time but whose written work, on women's and rural movements, I found not only impressive but inspiring. She was and is a controversial but respected figure on the Indian left (Omvedt 1979, 1993).

Back in New Delhi an Old Left student asked where I had been. When I told him he smirked and then intoned, dismissively, 'Oh, the New Left tour of India then!'. Yes, indeed, though certainly my trip was not confined to the newest lefts. I also met Amrita Chhachhi, then doing an advanced degree

in labour studies, who was one of the new wave of student and academic feminists, as well as her then partner, Paul Kurian – another brilliant young labour specialist. I recall eyes opened wide when I told them of doing a Communist Party school on imperialism with Ben Bradley, an iconic figure for the Indian left and national movement. Realising, for the first time, the advantages of age, I retailed my disagreements with Palme Dutt - likewise something of a mythical figure for the Indian left.<sup>13</sup> Amrita later became a colleague of mine, in Women and Development, at the Institute, combining women's with labour studies. I was somewhat overwhelmed by the number, quality, sophistication and cosmopolitanism of the students I was meeting. They seemed to be both informed about and committed to the struggles taking place worldwide. They wanted to know what was happening in Central America, in Poland, with the socialist-feminists in the UK, who they knew by name, if not personally. What they did not know about at that time - or have solidarity relations with - was Pakistan which, after all, had been part of India, was right next door, and which shared languages and cultures with India. Pakistan and India had, of course, had a number of wars and were seriously isolated from each other. Whatever the case, it was my impression that Pakistan was simply not on the radar of the alternative left in India at that time. The peculiarities of left internationalism in India did not stop here. Ruthie told me of her later visit with Sanjay to a tribal village in West Bengal, where the dominant party was, as mentioned above, the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Ruthie was granted reluctant access to the village by a local CPI(M) cadre, on condition that she didn't 'interfere with my tribals'. On a wall in the same village was a slogan which translated as 'Solidarity With The Revolutionary Peoples of Nicaragua and El Salvador'. The story left me wondering whether the CPI(M)'s tribals were also in solidarity with their ethnic brothers and sisters in neighbouring Bihar.

I have briefly mentioned (Chapter 6) the workshop on the Trade Unions and the Labouring Poor I co-organised (or co-disorganised) in New Delhi. This was on my second trip, in 1981. Despite the conflict between Arvind and myself this was something of an event for labour studies in India. We gathered a considerable part of the new independent left labour specialists there - many of them then students, some of them still prominent in Indian labour studies at time of writing. We also got a few shopfloor labour activists. And the cream of the young New Delhi feminists, all socialists and many therefore working on women's labour. Additionally, I had with me an ISS colleague, the autonomist Marxist jurist, Fernando Rojas from Colombia, Zillah Branco, a Communist from Portugal, Rhoda Reddock from Trinidad, and - as the chubby fairy on top of the Christmas tree - Henryk Szlajfer, working then with shopfloor Solidarność activists in Poland.

Henryk, who had been active in the Polish student movement of 1968, was a political-economist and Third World specialist, supporting less the leadership of Solidarnosc than workers in a particular region or enterprise. In New Delhi he turned down the opportunity of meeting with Indian social-democratic MP, George Fernandes, preferring to accompany me to meet the bonded labourers of Mehrauli. Given that George had earlier said to me that he didn't understand how a Polish Marxist could be opposed to a Marxist regime, Henryk certainly made the right choice, even if the Fernandes lawn was cool and shady, the brick-kiln surroundings hot and dusty. After the TULPI workshop, Henryk did a little Solidarnosc tour of India. Or possibly an *alternative* Solidarnosc tour, since I seem to remember Lech Wałęsa passing through India about this time, staying at a luxury hotel, and, well, *not* visiting Mehrauli. Within the TULPI workshop, however, Henryk had a rougher time: whilst it was the first time he had been confronted with feminists in the flesh (so to speak) it was not the first time they had met with what their Latin American sisters called a *Machista-Leninista*.

On return to The Hague I wrote a report on my Indian adventures, eventually cut to size and

published in a journal of radical Asian studies (Waterman 1982), also reproduced elsewhere. This argued the following propositions:

1. There is a *policy* crisis of the traditional national union leaderships, which are decreasingly able to obtain improvements, or to prevent worsening conditions even within the modern private or state sector;
2. There is an *organisational* crisis of the same unions, which continue to be marked by factional splits, stagnant or falling affiliations, and an inability to win over the autonomous unions which are in a majority in India (crucially in the modern industrial sector);
3. There is a *strategy* crisis, due to the same organisations' common formal acceptance of highly legalistic industrial relations machinery as the framework for industrial protest, and of parliamentary parties and elections as the framework for political protest. Paired with this is the use of ritualised forms of protest that do not raise consciousness for independent class action;
4. There appears to be an increasing unwillingness of what in India are officially called 'the weaker sections of society' to accept either their traditional lot, or the paternalism, tokenism and electoral manipulations to which they have been subjected; but demands for their legal rights by women, *harijans* ('scheduled castes'), *adivasis* ('scheduled tribes') and oppressed national/language groups are – in the absence of adequate self-organisation or support from the labour movement – so far provoking violent repression rather than winning significant victories;
5. Repeated industry-wide, city-wide – even state-wide – strike waves are being organised, often under joint action committees, often rejecting traditional leaderships;
6. Traditional leaderships are increasingly being challenged by populist/syndicalist/Marxist leaderships (the distinctions are not always clear between these), organising mass actions that break through legal niceties and traditional forms;
7. There may be a tendency toward worker-led unions, distinguishing them from both the traditional and the populist leaderships (both drawn overwhelmingly from the middle strata);
8. There are increasing cases in which unions (at industry, city or state level) are taking common action with other labouring and oppressed sectors.

My paper was entitled 'Seeing the Straws; Riding the Whirlwind', suggesting that either I or the somewhat inchoate movement was doing the seeing and the riding. Over a quarter of a century later I suspect that these propositions might be widely accepted across even the old unions in India. But the old left forms and habits have proven much more conservative and resilient. Accustomed as they have been to the structures and procedures of the Nehru-Gandhi period, they have been floundering as Indian capitalism reinvents itself in line with neo-liberal globalisation (though Hensman 2010 argues otherwise). On my return from India I also wrote a critical note on union solidarity between the Netherlands and India (Waterman 1983). This was published in *The Other Side*, the Indian monthly run by George Fernandes. Given my precarious position at the Institute, and my declining reputation with the Dutch FNV, this was published under the fairly transparent pseudonym 'Observer'. Fernandes actually wanted me to join the editorial board of his magazine. But my Indian comrades thought this would tarnish my reputation. I lacked at that time the self-confidence to argue that my published pieces might equally tarnish social-democracy. And my relationship with the magazine tailed off.

My last significant engagement with India came in 1984. This was when there occurred the world's worst – and longest lasting – industrial chemical disaster, in Bhopal. It occurred at a major Indian plant of the US Union Carbide corporation. A chemical explosion took place, releasing a poisonous gas that floated downwind to affect, primarily, migrant labourers in the adjoining *bustee* (squatter settlement). Neither the factory workers living in more salubrious areas nor the middle classes of this model city were seriously affected medically. I was involved from the Institute in The Hague and through the India Werkgroep (one of dozens of solidarity organisations funded in all or part by the Dutch state). At the Institute I coordinated some kind of teach-in. With the India Werkgroep I supported more national efforts. The two came together with a small demonstration at a Union Carbide-affiliated research centre somewhere near Leiden.

In the meantime Ruthie was travelling in India with Sanjay. And when, on one such trip, she was told that the Bhopal solidarity activists had been unable to find an Indian prepared to build a monument to the victims free of charge, she volunteered herself. Behind her she had several years sculpting at the Free Academy in The Hague, though never having made there anything taller than one metre. But alongside her in Delhi she had the help of the enthusiastic Sanjay, Amrita's father (a retired army engineer) and a bunch of other willing assistants or advisors. Within Bhopal she had help from the solidarity activists but also from people from the worst-affected *bustee*. Finally, I seem to recall, the *India Werkgroep* helped with raising funds to cover the cost of materials and transportation of the cast from Delhi to Bhopal.

Twentyfive years later the monument was still there, in front of the deserted and the still-polluted and polluting terrain of Union Carbide. The monument had defied the weather as well as the efforts of the city authorities to move it away from this bleeding wound to a city park. On this anniversary, a delegation from Bhopal toured Europe and visited The Hague. Poison is still leaking from the ruined plant. It has never been cleaned up. The Indian state made a shabby out-of-court settlement with Union Carbide (now owned by the even more notorious Dow Corporation, which produced Agent Orange for US use in Vietnam). Multinational capital and the Indian state washed their hands of the victims of their crimes. People in Bhopal are still dying from the poisons leaking into the earth and water supply. Yet the twentyfifth anniversary seemed to have impacted on the Indian and international media as never before. And, to her own surprise and gratification, Ruthie's monument got more coverage than ever previously.

## • **Poland: The Pope's Battalions**

I visited Poland in 1987, just before the collapse of a kind of Communism that made it look more like Chile under Pinochet than the Czechoslovakia I had known in either the 1950s or 1960s. Since Poland also had a military dictator with dark glasses, the major difference between the two countries might have been that Chile did not have its own home-grown Pope. The significance of this for the famous Polish workers' movement, *Solidarność*, was to become clear to me.

The visit was arranged by my old Zaria friend, Gavin Williams, and his friend and sometime colleague, Piotr Dutkiewicz. They had set up this Africa seminar in Warsaw. Gavin was enthusiastic about Piotr as some kind of leftist Africanist. He struck me more as a certainly bright guy but not particularly friendly and more interested in building an international career than a leftist one.<sup>14</sup> I had, moreover, few expectations of a seminar consisting largely of East European Africa specialists. Nor did I feel I had anything new to contribute to it. My motives for going were for possible access to

Solidarność, then underground. Piotr knew my friend Henryk Szlajfer, and I knew that Henryk could arrange for me to meet activists. Henryk hosted me in a Warsaw apartment so small that it felt more like a couple of third-class cabins on a ship. He transported me to and fro in a Polish Fiat built on the same scale. Staying with him and his wife, Maria, who I recall as being a translator/interpreter for the British Council, gave me an insight into life under Late-Communism – Very, Very Late-Communism – that was certainly worth more than the conference. What shocked me about Warsaw was that, outside the centre, I simply couldn't see anything more than a few miserable shops. Where was anything bought or sold? Or had the Poles reverted to barter? There was also the surrealistic experience of entering the university and seeing a whitewashed swastika being removed from one of its pillars. I never got to the bottom of this shocking experience.

Before meeting up with the Solidarność activists, Henryk had some historical swastika business to help me with. Ruthie's sister, Annie, in Amsterdam, had given me a gift for a friend of hers from the Polish Auschwitz committee. Henryk was clearly reluctant to accompany me. I knew from conversation in India that the Henryk had a problem with his Jewish identity. It was only when I first met him in India that I confirmed my suspicion – from his Germanic surname (in German it would have been Schleifer) – that he was Jewish. I had therefore asked him how someone with such a name and appearance survived state and popular anti-semitism in Poland. 'Well', he responded, 'lots of Poles have Germanic names, and there are so few Jews left in Poland that Poles don't know what they look like any more!'. Although he came from a prominent Jewish Communist family, Henryk did not want to talk about being Jewish. He nonetheless accompanied me to Annie's friend and translated for us. I was then confronted with my own Jewish background in a way that I would rather not have been. This elderly Auschwitz survivor said he needed Western help with a problem that was bothering the Polish committee. He asked us to wait and returned with a transparent plastic bag bearing a lump of crumbling wood. It came from the wooden barracks that Annie and he had been confined to within the extermination camp. The question was whether in the West there was some chemical, some treatment, that would preserve the crumbling barracks for posterity. And there was I, someone who thirty years earlier had refused to visit Auschwitz, holding it in my shaking hands. This was, however, not to be the end of our Jewish Question. I had brought with me a present for Henryk. This was Primo Levi's novel about a Jewish partisan in wartime Poland, *If Not Now, When?* (Levi 1995). The title comes from that wonderful saying from the Jewish scholar, Hillel:

If I am not for myself, then who will be for me?  
And if I am only for myself, then what am I?  
And if not now, when?

I had been inspired by the saying and shattered by the book. And so, he later told me, had been Henryk.

Henryk had – and was going to have - a rather more dramatic life than I could have then imagined. I had originally come across him as a writer on Solidarność in one or other English-language Marxist publication. I think I had already invited him to New Delhi when it occurred to me to check his credentials with Aleks, an old Polish friend of almost identical background. His response was to exclaim: 'That police spy!' He was referring to Henryk's role during the student protests of 1968, in which both had been involved. However, to my great relief, Aleks later withdrew his accusation and apologised for having made it.<sup>15</sup> When I actually met him, Henryk told me of his having been arrested and imprisoned during that period, of having been released on condition of a period of exile (actually,

I now recall, a Latin American tradition), when he had worked as a researcher in Portugal and either in or on Africa. At the time I knew him, in the 1980s, he was in the once-internationally-respected African Studies Institute in Warsaw. Neither in New Delhi, nor later in Warsaw, did Henryk ever give me reason to suspect his political credentials.<sup>16</sup>

My visits to activists of Solidarność with Henryk were sobering. I had already recognised in NILS that one could not treat this movement as if it were a Chilean or South African one (later we will have to consider whether we could treat Third World movements as if they should have been considered uniform objects of ‘First-World Third-Worldism’). Much of the Western left *was* so treating Solidarność, and burdening it with their own assumptions about a revolutionary socialist working class, their hopes for *real* socialism in Eastern Europe.<sup>17</sup> I had been helped along my road to reality by a chilly interview with a Solidarność representative who had an office in the Brussels headquarters of the ICFTU. Before I had had a chance to expose my naïve optimism, he made clear his lack of interest in any Western leftist attitudes. But, then, he would have been, by that time, heavily involved in whatever it was that the ICFTU and its Western affiliates were doing for Solidarność.<sup>18</sup> What exactly this was, the ICFTU was not telling us and has never since told in full. It may seem curious that even after the collapse of Communism, the ICFTU and its affiliates were not interested in trumpeting their considerable aid to Solidarność. But, then, historically, such efforts had overlapped with those of Western intelligence agencies, particularly those of the US Central Intelligence Agency. In the 1980s, the international solidarity activities of the ICFTU were still often dominated by Cold War diplomatic discourse and clandestine practices. Such activities would have given the few officers concerned a sense of their own significance quite separate from that of informing and mobilising any actual workers. And, in Poland, ICFTU relations would have been rather with a Solidarność leadership increasingly distanced from the workers than with any shopfloor activists. It was two or three of the latter that Henryk introduced me to on my Warsaw trip.

The first interview took place in a room decorated with a large portrait of the Polish Pope, a crucifix, and a postcard commemorating Popieluszko, the pro-Solidarność priest murdered by the Polish security.<sup>19</sup> The two workers I interviewed were much more concerned with telling me about the problems of trying to exploit the legally-existing Workers’ Council structure than in listening to my questions about international solidarity. I concluded:

The three interviews revealed more problems than solutions, raised more questions than answers. We are only at the beginning of solidarity with Solidarność. The first, easy, period is long over. The building of grassroots contacts between Polish and foreign workers requires motivation at both ends, plus a modest minimum of money, plus means.

The motivation is probably best developed amongst internationally-oriented or experienced activists. But, then, we may have to learn to deal not with some symbol of revolutionary proletarian democracy but with flesh-and-blood Polish workers – mostly Catholic, nationalist, anti-Communist ... as well as being pro-Free World and not very advanced on women’s liberation. (Waterman 1987)

Two processes unfortunately prevented even these modest aspirations from having any effect: that, as earlier mentioned, the new shopfloor activism was by now in decline; and that, in 1989, Communism collapsed – without much help from an international and internationalist proletariat. I was to then recall the famous, if apocryphal, sneer of Stalin, ‘How many divisions has the Pope?’.

## • **Western Europe: The Rise and Fall of Shopfloor Internationalism**

The UK is, of course, a part of Western Europe, even if clearly also apart from it ('heavy fog in the Channel, continent isolated'. The wave of labour militancy, shopfloor internationalism and of a new kind of international labour studies was to wash across both in the 1980s. This was fortunate for me at a time when I needed all the international recognition I could get. I have earlier dealt with *International Labour Reports* and mentioned various other native efforts at a new labour internationalism in the UK, but not the 'NILS tour' of at least England that I arranged around 1984. The idea was to fill up the car with interested students from the ISS, with copies of the NILS and books I had been editing in connection with the newsletter, to take a ferry across to the UK and go anywhere that was prepared to host us. In The Hague I had the commitment of two labour studies students, Karamat Ali, from Pakistan, then developing the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research,<sup>20</sup> and Harsh Kapoor from India, with a background in labour-support activities there.<sup>21</sup> Karamat we had to dig out of bed in The Hague, on our way to the ferry. We certainly went to Coventry, Birmingham and Newcastle, possibly also to London and Manchester. Mostly we were hosted by worker or labour centres such as the Coventry Workshop. Commonly set up with the support of the traditional trades councils, and funded by labour municipalities, these represented an effort to both support the labour movement, to reach out to the wider community, and to provide research and communication services. Given the general upswing in worker activism at this time (Cohen 2006, Watters 1992), and the inheritance of 1968 student radicalism, they were also often involved in labour internationalism. The great British miners' strike of 1984-85 was taking place at this time, so we met miners travelling south to gather support and collect money. It was going to be their first-ever trip to London. I think it was at the Birmingham centre that some northern miners had the following conversation with the two South Asians:

*Miner 1:* You got mining in India, then?

*Harsh:* Oh, yes, we have quite a lot of mines in India.

*Miner 2:* About how many miners then?

*Harsh:* Well, I am not sure really, maybe five or six million.

*Miner 1:* Shit! Did you hear that Bill? They've got six *million* fuckin' miners in India! [Turns to Karamat]. What about you in Pakistan? Have you got that many miners too?

*Karamat:* No, no! Not so much. Nothing like India. Pakistan is much smaller than India.

*Miner 2:* How many have you got then?

*Karamat:* Well ... not more than, maybe, one million.

*Miner 1:* Fuck me!<sup>22</sup>

Possibly inspired, or provoked, by this conversation, Karamat decided to abandon the tour to go off and visit some Midlands miners. Having now lost one-third of our labour internationalists, I continued with Harsh, who was apparently in the middle of some quite heavy depression. Newcastle was good, because they were well organised and because our working-class host had got himself, cheap, one of the bourgeois mansions left over from the period of Newcastle's glory. Elsewhere we were not so lucky. At one stop I was given sheets that had apparently been used not so much by a single person as a couple. Well, bearing in mind the number of stains on the sheet, I thought it *must* have been a

couple. I had always known that Britain was a country of scruffs but, after living in the spotless Netherlands, this was definitely the pits. I think it was on this trip that I also went to the University of Kent for a conference, and met up with Zafar Shaheed, then completing his PhD on workers in Pakistan.<sup>23</sup>

Britha Mikkelsen, a Danish development specialist with an interest in African labour, coordinated or at least initiated some kind of NILS tour for me in Denmark, Sweden and Norway in the early-1980s (Waterman 1983). I roamed a range of third-world labour studies and solidarity operations in the three countries. This means the range from the more or less state-approved social-democratic organisations to the more or less autonomous or Marxist ones. Visits therefore included the trade unions of each of the three, younger generation scholars, and students still doing their PhDs. I was impressed by the architecture of social democracy in Oslo, where I found myself in a square surrounded by the grey headquarters of the unions, the party and – I think – the cooperative movement. I felt as if I was in East Europe again. Sweden had the best-developed international labour studies activity, centred on a network called AKUT. Here I also met Nigeria specialists, Bjorn Beckman and his wife Gunilla Andrae, later to do a major study on textile worker unions there (Andrae and Beckman 1999). There was to be an interesting follow-up to this trip. I was approached by a guy from a Ministry of Development Cooperation in Norway who asked whether I was prepared to do an evaluation of national and international union development projects funded by the Norwegians. I did not hum and ha too long about this. On the one hand it would give me the possibility of seeing in detail what such projects amounted to. On the other it might restore my somewhat low reputation within the Institute. I was not worried about becoming as incorporated into development cooperation as some of my colleagues were since I had no intention of making a career out of consultation and evaluation. A month later the Man in the Ministry called me back. He was apologetic: it was not that I was unacceptable to the ministry or even to the Norwegian unions. But the ICFTU had blackballed me. The guy further explained that, given this unexpected exclusion, the ministry was itself now in difficulties since it still needed a consultant with expertise in unions and development. ‘Oh, someone with an ICFTU stamp of approval and who will do a whitewash job, then?’, I asked. ‘I am afraid so’, he responded. I proffered an English name. My candidate accepted the job. And, a year later, the Man from the Ministry provided me with a copy of the eventual report: it was a whitewash job.

## • **El Perú: The Binary Opposite of the Netherlands?**

I arrived in Peru, in June 1986, one day after an uprising of *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) Maoist guerrillas in three Lima prisons. President Alan Garcia was hosting a Congress of the Socialist International (SI) in Lima, intended to demonstrate that he was a social democrat and that the SI was a power also in the Third World. But *Sendero* had thought this an opportunity to expose the supposedly social-democratic APRA government before the international media.<sup>24</sup> The Peruvian military needed little encouragement, slaughtering the barely-armed *Senderista* prisoners and any others who happened to be in the way. In Lurigancho it was said they killed the prisoners despite their having surrendered. I heard all this in the airport from my Peruvian hostess, who also pointed out to me an internationally-known Peruvian left activist and writer, who seemed to be fleeing out whilst I was flying in. We drove into a drab Lima, cold and dank (this was in the depths of its admittedly mild winter), between power-station or warehouse walls five metres high, surmounted by watchtowers. That night a bomb went off at the entrance to the naval headquarters, maybe 250 metres from where I

was soundly sleeping. It was an altogether inauspicious arrival. I was in Peru, as my marriage was falling apart (see Chapter 6), and because of my relationship with this local feminist activist who had herself been working with women workers in Lima. This was Yenny,<sup>25</sup> then working with the best-known women's centre in Peru, Flora Tristán. Yenny had been at the Institute of Social Studies – fortunately in the women's programme rather than my own. We had started a relationship in The Hague and she had offered to host me in Lima. I was planning a little research project on 'the transmission and reception of international labour information in Peru' (Waterman and Arellano 1986). Whilst pursuing Yenny, therefore, I was also pursuing my interest in the interrelationship between labour internationalism and communication. Or the other way round. But, in any case, there had been a long-standing relationship between the Institute and Peru. My colleague, Frits Wils, had lived, studied and taught there and had done his PhD on Peru. He was supervising an ISS student from the Peruvian NGO community, and had introduced me to labour specialists and activists there. Indeed, the Netherlands seemed to have had something of a love affair with Peru, particularly during the period of the radical-nationalist military regime of Velasco, 1968-75. I have always wondered whether this did not have something to do with not only the late-1960s Dutch flirtation with participation and self-management but also Dutch fascination with a country that could hardly be less like the Netherlands. Where the Netherlands was flat, temperate, homogeneous and a haven of social compromise, Peru was (is) mountainous, tropical, heterogeneous (to say the least) and a battlefield of multiple social conflicts. The Dutch fascination with Peru led to extensive Dutch development cooperation, and dozens, if not hundreds of development aid projects. It also led to a major Dutch research project, on Peruvian miners and their struggles, resulting in the joint PhD project of Dirk Kruijt and Menno Vellinga (for one English language outcome, see Kruijt and Vellinga 1979).

Following a suggestion of my ISS colleague, Cees Hamelink, I contacted his friend, Rafael Roncagliolo, then running a Latin-American communication research NGO, the Institute for Latin America (IPAL).<sup>26</sup> When, after three days, my relationship with Yenny also blew up I was also more than desperate. Lima, at the depths of its damp and overcast winter, was not a good place in which to feel humiliated and depressed. Whilst I had some limited funding from the Institute, I had also put my annual holiday bonus into this project, but there was no way I could cover even the cheapest hotel for the seven weeks planned. From IPAL I phoned my French/Peruvian friend, Denis Sulmont, doyen of Peruvian labour specialists, who had supported my Third World Strikes seminar a few years earlier (see Chapter 6). Denis and his wife, a chirpy Peruvian with the astoundingly Dutch name of Roelfien Haak, saved my life by inviting me to stay in their apartment, just a few blocks from the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú* (Peru's prestigious private university, better known simply as *La Católica*) where he taught. Denis, who must have then been about 40, but who looked 20, was co-heading a labour NGO, ADEC-ATC. Between Rafo and Denis, IPAL and the ATC, I actually had a privileged base for my research. Denis supplied the final element, an attractive and lively research assistant in the shape of Nebiur Arellano, who had just completed her MA with him. Nebiur, who was then the partner of British journalist, Jonathon Cavanagh, had excellent English, worked hard, knew her way around both Lima and the Lima-based unions. She was also reliable and warm-hearted. At a certain moment she and her journalist partner even provided me with free accommodation. I also had a helpful friend, Mario Padron, a student of Frits Wils, then working for the major Peruvian NGO, Desco.<sup>27</sup>

I recall, at this time, receiving a letter from my nephew, Shaun, then at Cambridge University and recovering from a broken love affair. 'Relationships', he wrote, 'how I *hate* that word!' The break-up of mine, however, only spurred me on to make a success of my research project.

I am not sure whether this was a good or a bad time to be researching this topic in this city (or any other city or country, I suppose). The later-1980s proved to be something of a peak for labour organisation and protest in Peru. The left was still riding a wave of social protest that had brought down a military regime. The *Izquierda Unida* (the United left or IU) had many parliamentary representatives and governed a number of cities, including Lima and its major shanty-town, Villa el Salvador. The Communist union centre, the CGTP (*Confederación General de Trabajo del Peru*) was the major one in Peru. It was beating the drum for ‘class and mass unionism’ and was a prominent affiliate of the Communist WFTU. The major mineworker’s federation, the FNTMMSP (National Federation of Mining, Metallurgy and Steel Workers) had survived repression under the military regime and been recently involved in a tri-national Andean mineworker union meeting. More significantly, for my purposes, there was a thriving left print culture, with numerous weekly and monthly papers and magazines.<sup>28</sup>

It was these publications, many archived by IPAL, that provided the major basis for my research, given that I could manage written Spanish far more easily than the spoken. The publications also lent themselves to measurement of the content. Additionally, however, I was doing interviews and administering an open-ended survey, taping responses, with Nebiur laboriously transcribing and translating these. I recall, in particular, interviewing dockworker unionists in Lima’s port, Callao. This was a comparatively well-organised union, with an Aprista parliamentarian as its leader, which then entertained Nebiur and me to *ceviche* at an exclusive Lima yacht club. *Oh!?* At the other extreme were the small, squat, dark Andean peasant-miners in the FNTMMSP’s tiny Lima office. Trying to interview them – if open-endedly – it gradually dawned on me that for these guys Lima was foreign enough; questions concerning Solidarnosc in Poland were as relevant to them as elephants in Africa. Perhaps less so. For these *Andinos* as for their forebears in the amazing novel of Ciro Alegría (1983) the world was still broad and alien.

The international, if not in communicational form, was less foreign to the miner families squatted in a suburban stadium. These had more or less settled there after a *marcha de sacrificio* (hunger march) from the distant southern Andes. They were certainly interested in political and financial support from wherever. I happened to accompany to this stadium a couple of Belgian leaders of mineworkers, here representing the Brussels-based International Mineworkers Federation. They were clearly as shocked as I was. But not so much as *I* was when one of them said that he would raise the case with – I seem to recall – his acquaintance, the Belgian ambassador to Peru.

Surrounded by the Lima left, concentrating on its media, I could hardly be unaware of José Carlos Mariátegui (1894–1930). Sometimes referred to as ‘the Peruvian Gramsci’,<sup>29</sup> Mariátegui was the founding father of Marxism in Peru, a founder also of the CGTP, of the Communist Party of Peru, and of various consecutive or simultaneous publications, including *Amauta* (Quechua: Teacher)<sup>30</sup>, and *Labor* (Labour). Mariátegui was a largely self-educated and, in any case, independent Marxist, identified with but quite independent of Russian or any other European Communism. Sitting on someone’s floor at a party and browsing through the quasi-universal collection of Mariátegui’s essays, I came across one on ‘Nationalism and Internationalism’. It is a classical, if rare, statement of proletarian internationalism, but marked by asides on state internationalism (the League of Nations), fascist internationalism and ...wow? ... the new means of communication:

*Las comunicaciones son el tejido nervioso de esta humanidad internacionalizada y solidaria* (Mariátegui 1923: 164)

I paraphrased this into colloquial English as ‘communication is the nervous system of internationalism and solidarity’. And I worked it into the title of my Working Paper.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, I added his labour periodical, *Labor*, to those I was subjecting to content analysis, even though this had appeared for only a year or so and then in 1928-29.

For better or for worse, it turned out that, in my collected set, *Labor* was the left medium with most international coverage! However, the project did not concern itself only with the apparent decline of interest in the international over the decades in Peru. This decline was real enough and not simply explained away in terms of the better *international* than *national* communications of the Peruvian left in the 1920s.<sup>32</sup> In any case, my concern was not only with the quantity but the quality of such information, and the Peruvian left media required me to develop a typology of international labour content without the assumption that it was meaningfully *internationalist*. Or, for that matter, that it represented not simply *information* but an alternative type of *communication* (participatory, dialogical, empowering).

My conclusion was that despite the limited amount and types of international labour information in Peru, workers had friendly or favourable attitudes toward labour and unions elsewhere. And I postulated, over-optimistically, that this was likely to grow. Given, however, that the both indigenous and exogenous factors (neo-liberal globalisation) put unions and the left on the defensive, things were only to get worse. Not only did the left-of-centre daily, *La Republica*, drop its weekly labour page. Even *Cuadernos Laborales*, the monthly of Denis Sulmont’s ATC, seemed to abandon its international coverage. My conclusions, not for the first time, were over-optimistic, even where qualified. They could have been fairly considered utopian, and then in the negative sense. This was before the time in which I came to recognise utopianism as an essential part of the social-scientific armoury! So, although ATC eventually published our Working Paper in Spanish, it had no effect on international labour communication in Peru. The benefit of the study was, rather, for my own understanding of the matter.

## • **Barcelona: Communicating Labour Internationalism**

I got to Barcelona via Hamburg. Through an old friend I had heard of this International Ports and Harbours Conference, being supported by the Green-Left municipality in Hamburg, and to be attended by Green and left dockers’ unions, transport specialists and urban planners from all over Europe. I had my Lagos study under my belt. I was familiar with the official international of dockers, incorporated within the International Transportworkers Federation (ITF). And I had heard from my friend about a European network of waterfront workers. In Hamburg I stayed in a squat. I was welcomed by a centre providing advice to workers and unions on computerisation. The conference, with its mixture of committed academics, professionals, union officers and waterfront representatives, was an excellent one. I had been hoping this was to be the first of a series but it turned out – like so many imaginative initiatives in this era – to be a one-off. But whilst the leader of the Hamburg dockers was cool, if not cold, those from Aarhus in Denmark and from Barcelona and the Canary Islands in Spain were welcoming. They were not only confronted by containerisation and computerisation but were open to the use of information technology for solidarity activities.

The next couple of years, from around 1986 to 1988, I went back and forth to Barcelona, headquarters of the major Spanish waterfront workers’ union. The union was actually quite unique. It was clearly inspired by the Spanish tradition of anarcho-syndicalism, and possibly also by the

*comisiones obreras* (the Communist-led workers' commissions that had a semi-clandestine existence toward the end of the Franco era). But it was autonomous from both the national anarcho-sindicalist and the Communist union centres. So autonomous was it from the conventional trade-union form that it didn't use this name, but was known simply as the *Coordinadora* (Coordination) of dockworkers. What, however, particularly interested me was the European network and, more particularly, this network as a model, or at least an example of a new 'communications internationalism' amongst workers.

Being in Barcelona, on one occasion, for a month or more, had all kinds of added advantages. To start with, it is an exceptional city, with a beautiful geographical site, wonderfully preserved – by the horrors of Franco – from those of the Second World War, so that its urban structure, architecture, its specifically Catalan characteristics, were all there to be admired by North European me. I loved not only its famous boulevards and parks but also its nineteenth century covered market (then declining) and its palatial post office. Secondly, whilst the new container harbour was out of sight (literally rather than figuratively), the historical port was still just about in existence, and within walking distance of the city centre. Thirdly, the three-to-four storey office of the Organisation of Stevedores of Barcelona Port (OEPB) was in the city centre *barrio* of Barceloneta, right next to the old port. Barceloneta, by now an equivalent of London's Soho, still had the historical tenements built for the workers of the port and of a now-disused power station. Indeed, I even lived in one of these tiny apartments for several weeks. Barcelona was also, for me, part of international working-class history because of its role in the Spanish Civil War – and in the historical and literary accounts of that period. So I felt surrounded by and steeped in social history whilst trying to add my little bit to this.

Oh, yes, I also had money from the ISS to do a one-month Spanish course. Some of this must have brushed off on me, despite the school being a horrible rip-off operation, in an office block, on a noisy street, in the middle of summer and with no air conditioning. It was also humiliating being surrounded by schoolkids from France and elsewhere, who already knew the grammar (or who had minds open to grammar). The only compensation for me was in my large and exotic vocabulary, absorbed over the years from the Spanish of sociology and socialism.

Research on the *Coordinadora* enabled me to study both the internationalism of the Spanish dockworkers and their communication practices. I began with the following specifications:

My understanding of [the New Labour Internationalism] is: 1) cross-border solidarity activity by or between wage-workers at shopfloor, grassroots or community level; 2) expressing their daily-life concerns and aspirations; 3) based on their resources and efforts; 4) in opposition to the major forces or expressions of international exploitation and oppression (e.g. capitalism, statism, patriarchy, racism, imperialism, militarism); 5) tending to create a global community of interest and activity; 6) complementary to those of other mass popular and democratic interests, identities and movements (e.g. of women, oppressed national/ethnic communities, human rights, the environment).

My understanding of [Internationalist Communication] is: 1) the creation of cross-border solidarity relations which enrich and empower popular and democratic communities or collectivities by exchanging, sharing, diversifying and synthesising their ideas, skills and arts; 2) implying a) communication that uses popular language and images confronting those of the oppressor, b) an orientation toward a general social transformation, c) a mobilising and organising role, d) an active role by the popular sector in production and

distribution. (Waterman 1993)

These were then applied to the Coordinadora and its network of European dockers, but more particularly to its means of communications. These included a Spanish-language monthly paper, *La Estiba*, an occasional English-language bulletin, its meetings and exchange visits. The OEPB had an egalitarian ethic both in distribution of available dock work and in its organisational structure and practices. Solidarity was of high importance, and practised locally, nationally, on the European level and even with the Third World. It had close relations with dockers at waterfront level in half-a-dozen ports and had taken effective common action with them on several occasions. During the 1980s Barcelona and other ports in the network were being confronted by a late but forceful wave of industrial rationalisation, including containerisation and computerisation. This was decimating the labour force and undermining traditional solidarity practices. The docker network had little time for either national or international union structures, most of which they considered irrelevant and less to be opposed than simply ignored. In turn the OEPB and Coordinadora received the support of not only their opposite numbers abroad but also of Sergio Bologna (an Italian *autonomista* who was a specialist on the transport industry) and of anarcho-syndicalists in the US and the UK. I was overwhelmed by their sophisticated understanding of computerisation – presented to the Hamburg conference mentioned above, although somewhat underwhelmed by their one computer, an ancient IBM word processor as large as a filing cabinet (horizontal), which they could have possibly sold to a museum or traded for a PC.

The foreign anarcho-syndicalist friends of the Coordinadora, unfortunately, tended to simply idealise it. None of these ever realised – or possibly admitted to themselves – that the effective ‘community at work’ had gained them a privileged status among Spanish workers. It allowed workers, for example, to move out of Barceloneta and into apartments spread all over the city. So the ‘community of residence’ had been lost. And, as Spain became Europeanised, the dockers lost their previously high profile in the city (though still capable of disruptive demonstrations in the city centre close by). Furthermore, the old port was being converted into a yachting harbour, so their Barceloneta office was no longer in the same place they worked and lived. I gradually came to realise the limitations of the model, at all levels of activity, as well as in its communications internationalism. It was difficult for me to come to terms with this since they were simply such great people, carrying on innovatory activities.

In my efforts to promote alternative international labour communication, I had another chastening experience in Barcelona. This was in trying to set up a dialogue between my friends in the Coordinadora and my friends in the US Union for Democratic Communication (UDC). The UDC represented, perhaps, the left wing of the ‘critical’ International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR).<sup>33</sup> This was having its annual conference in Barcelona. The UDC was both interested in labour and clearly pro-labour. Indeed, my Peruvian research was eventually published in a compilation produced by the UDC. Despite the theoretical or ideological sympathies of my left communications friends, some of whom spoke fluent Spanish, the meeting was an embarrassing failure. The academics seemed little motivated or capable of communicating with workers. And the dockworkers, despite their sterling communications activities, clearly had no idea of academia, academic conferences or left media activism.

At that time, the Coordinadora had not discovered email. They used their ancient IBM as an electronic typesetter. And for the rest depended on phone and fax.<sup>34</sup>

## • **The Philippines: Not Communicating Labour Internationalism**

Where I *should* have been late-1989 was, of course, in Eastern Europe, with which I had a considerable familiarity. But, whilst here the iron curtain was being torn down by a coincidence of the collapse of state-socialist morale and the rise of popular discontent, I was in Manila in the Philippines. This trip was fortuitous, due to the occurrence there of a conference of the IAMCR. Having once obtained the customary ISS funding for this, I attached a research project request and – icing on the cake – a trip home via Hong Kong, Seoul, Tokyo, Honolulu (home of the Philippines labour-support bulletin in the US), San Francisco and New York. But I was anyway motivated to research international labour communication in the Philippines. Part of this interest came from *International Labour Reports* which, as I have suggested above, was closely identified with the *Kilusang Mayo Uno* union confederation (KMU – the May First Movement). My friend, Kim Scipes, US representative of ILR at this time, was an ardent supporter of the KMU and a frequent visitor to the Philippines.

The KMU, because of its militancy against both the Marcos dictatorship and its problematically-democratic successors, shared internationally the allure of the militant unions in South Africa, Brazil and South Korea.<sup>35</sup> It was supported by a number of campaigns and support groups in Europe and North America. And it received a considerable amount of European development funding agency support, directly or indirectly. It also ran an ‘International Affair’ annually in the Philippines. It published various bulletins in English aimed at its supporters abroad. It was, however, also common knowledge that the KMU was, despite its pretensions to autonomy, the union front organisation of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines.

There was also Dutch interest in the KMU. The headquarters of the armed underground CPP were in Utrecht, where resided also its semi-mythical – and seriously self-aggrandising founder and leader – Jose Maria (Joma) Sison. In the flurry of excitement following the ‘People’s Power’ movement that brought an end to the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, leaders of the non-Maoist or non-Communist Filipino left came to the Netherlands and visited the ISS. Prominent amongst these was Randy David, a journalist, activist and academic, then running the Third World Studies Centre at the University of the Philippines in the Manila suburb, Diliman. Indeed, I had been present at a party in the house near The Hague of my ISS colleague, Aurora Carreon, at which – possibly for the first time – Randy Met Joma.

As much as I had been impressed and attracted by Randy I was unimpressed and even repelled by Joma. After all the praise heaped on the latter, by worshippers and critics alike, I found someone with not only minus zero charisma, but also of impressively limited intelligence. Whatever the subject of a public event, Joma would simply speak on the Party Idea he happened to have on his mind. Asked a question in which he was uninterested or to which he had no answer, he would cheerfully provide the answer to a question no one had posed. I was myself more fortunate. When, at that party, I had asked him whether there was not a problem in the Philippines with popular anti-Communism amongst the population, he replied, gravely,

Yes, Peter, we recognise this. It’s due to the hierarchy of the Church and to the propaganda of the comprador bourgeoisie. But let me assure you, Peter, that if we were in power for six months, the problem would be solved.

I was aghast, being only too aware of the ‘problem-solving’ methods of such Communist parties and regimes as those with which the CPP was related, including *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru. This was not

the last time I was to be profoundly shocked at the naïvety or crudity of the CPP – nor, regrettably, of some of its labour activists. Before departing for the country itself, I received plentiful materials and cautious analyses by the Trotskyist Philippines specialist, Pierre Rousset. Pierre was the longtime coordinator of the international school of the Fourth International<sup>36</sup> in Amsterdam, the cautiously-named International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE). Pierre had spent time in the Philippines, and his wife, Sally, was a Filipina. Pierre had, indeed, published, in the IIRE working paper series, a couple of my own papers.<sup>37</sup> I should also mention that I had, over the years, had contact with the ultra-respectable School of Labour and Industrial Relations (SOLAIR)<sup>38</sup> at UP, a number of whose staff had done labour studies at ISS. We had also had at ISS a number of Filipino students associated with the ‘National Democratic’ project of the CPP.<sup>39</sup> One of them, who became a personal friend, was well-informed about the KMU and its solidarity work in Europe.

What with all these sources, plus a one-metre cabinet drawer of relevant materials on the Philippines and its unions,<sup>40</sup> I felt rather well prepared for my project. At Manila airport, I was met by Robert (not his real name), a Belgian Maoist working with the KMU on its international relations. I had already met Robert in The Hague but been aghast that a consultant on union internationalism should be ignorant of the existence of the ICFTU, even when spelled out – especially given that its headquarters were in his capital city. Things would get worse. Robert and his beautiful Filipina partner were hosting me for a couple of nights in Manila. As I made clear that it was not in the interest of my research or even of the KMU if I was to be too closely associated publicly with just one tendency in the union movement, Robert, clearly a true believer, bawled me out. My compensation was later hearing, in the next-door bedroom, Robert being heatedly told off – for something or other – by his certainly more hospitable girlfriend.

After Lima, Manila was no surprise, being not simply Latin-Americanised but also Americanised. Indeed, the saying, ‘500 years of Spain and fifty years of Hollywood’ seemed a useful if dismissive introduction to the city. There was high-rise Makati with its supermarkets, the colonial city centre and palace of government, the appalling slums cantilevered out over the festering river, the world’s biggest garbage dump, the luxurious ‘sub-divisions’ with the heavily-guarded homes of the super-rich. And, finally, the haven of UP, Diliman. I arrived at SOLAIR during a vacation and, I seem to recall, on a Sunday. No canteen functioning, no bars or food stores in sight. After moving in to a more than adequate room, I wandered hungrily in the direction of the deserted canteen. In the kitchen I found a group of young men, one strumming a guitar, cooking stew on a small stove on the floor. There was nothing on offer except the stew. ‘But’, they said, after a short consultation in Pilipino, ‘we should warn you that it is dog’. Being as hungry as two of these, and anyway hoping they were pulling my leg, I ate. ‘How was it?’, they asked solicitously. ‘Great!’, I replied, ‘much better than cat.’

As in Peru, I met and interviewed union leaders and workers (factory, dock) concerning international solidarity communication. But, even more than in Peru, the words ‘communication’ and ‘media’ did not click. I would ask about *information and ideas* and they would reply on *solidarity organisations and activity*. Insofar as I was able to get answers, or to find relevant media, it was evident that what the KMU was involved in had to be called propaganda.<sup>41</sup> What the KMU was interested in communicating either from the world to its followers, or from the KMU (rather than its followers) to the world was a faith. This was understandable, given that the students and others who joined the very considerable Communist wave under and against the Marcos regime in the 1970s, had gone from Social Catholicism to Maoist Marxism without passing through any intermediate experience of Secular Liberal Rationalism. But this hardly explains the reproduction of KMU

propaganda by the Secular Rationalist European Liberals and left. Here there was employed a simple KMU argument, to the effect that any counter-information or critique of the KMU, or the 'National Democratic Project', would 'play into the hands of the enemy'. Given that both the unavoidably open KMU and the clandestine CPP were penetrated by government agents, and that the latter was none-too-professional concerning its confidential information, I found this argument more disingenuous than naïve.<sup>42</sup> But much of the New left in Europe at this time was involved in the myth of the revolutionary savage, and in self-subordination to such presumed bearers of international revolution. Since this collective agent existed no more than Rousseau's 'noble savage', they were, rather, created and represented by such bodies as the KMU. The result was that that many Western solidarity groups and writers would repeat KMU propaganda whether they believed it or not.

The best (worst?) example of KMU propaganda I encountered was a little KMU handbook, 'Genuine Trade Unionism'. Given that this was published in English, whilst the *lingua franca* of most workers was Pilipino, this publication was available to, if not written for, an international readership. I heard, however, that it had been distributed (illegally, I presume) in Malaysia and translated in South Korea. Attractively produced, and illustrated with Maoist-style heroic workers, it projected a Manichean vision of Philippines society and unionism, with the KMU representing 'Genuine Trade Unionism' and its opponents as 'Yellow'.

I arrived at a critical period for KMU internationalism, given its handling of the Tien an Men massacre earlier in 1989. After an initial endorsement of Chinese state repression, the KMU passed two other resolutions, of which even the third was mealy-mouthed. What had apparently happened was that the CPP cadres within the KMU head office had reacted with a knee-jerk, in a way that the party itself might not have preferred (at least from its foreign-funded front organisations). It was also a reaction that more-independent KMU leaders rejected. The effect internationally was serious since the KMU lost its democratic credentials with the development funding agencies, and its socialist ones with the left solidarity committees (Waterman 1998a: Ch. 5). In succeeding years it was plagued by splits and vicious charges and counter-charges. From its website the KMU still looks more like a radical-nationalist union centre of a familiar twentieth century type.<sup>43</sup>

My Philippines trip did not really have a happy ending, however much it may have increased my experience of Communist unionism and internationalism. The productive outcome concerned labour internationalism rather than the communication of such. This was, moreover, the first time in all my research trips at the ISS that I did not write up and publish my findings. The ISS could not have cared less: it had never, during my twentyseven years there, ever asked for an outcome, even, as I have mentioned, from paid attendance at academic conferences. As for my comrades in the North American and European solidarity movement, they would have been relieved that I did not write up my findings ... if they had noticed. I came back from Manila via the US. And had heavy discussions, not to say bitter arguments, with two good friends – both of them heavily identified with the KMU. I would have had to severely critique not only the KMU's international communication efforts but also those of such friends in the US, UK and elsewhere in Europe. And, although I frequently locked horns on the KMU with my friend Kim Scipes, I was, apparently, not prepared to publicly confront my own little political community full-frontally. Too bad, really, because now I can claim absolutely no credit for foresight.

- **South Africa: Post-Colonialism of a Special Type<sup>44</sup>**

My six months in South Africa, just after the end of Apartheid, in the second half of 1994, was the result of another happy coincidence. This time it was the desire of a South African colleague to trade places. Len Suransky (White, Jewish, leftwing)<sup>45</sup> had an intelligent, warmhearted, Dutch academic wife, Caroline, and two bouncy little girls who all wanted a break from the *sturm und drang* of South Africa. I myself, of course, was in need of a break from a country and institute lacking either *sturm* or *drang*. Len was teaching politics at the ‘Non-White’ University of Durban Westville (UDW). The exchange required of me three months of teaching and three of research. We traded homes, gardens, swimming pools (his) and bicycles (mine). They got a two-bedroom groundfloor apartment, a peaceful cross-class, multi-culti neighbourhood, with shops on the corner, four minutes walk from the ISS, and about ninety minutes by train from most of the Netherlands. I got a three-to-four bedroom bungalow, near the elite ‘Historically White’ University of Natal Durban (UND), a daily domestic worker, a weekly gardener, no shops in view, some thirty minutes by car from UDW. I could opt between driving along the safe main roads or taking a short-cut past Durban’s major city-centre slum (with dire warnings of brickbats and car-jackings).

Given that most houses in the neighbourhood had high fences, sometimes with barbed wire, sometimes electrified, I felt not entirely secure within the Suransky home. This was protected by little more than wooden fences and a wooden gate. I had arrived one week before their departure in order to familiarise myself. Asked whether or not I wanted to look after their dog whilst they were away, I had said no. But when I later asked about the security arrangements, they had said: ‘That was the dog!’. Actually, I had no problem during my six months. But after they returned they told me that their house had been burgled whilst they were all sleeping (including the dog?). They were lucky not to have been beaten or killed. After this they had finally given way to the security measures customary to middle-class South Africans – whatever their colour.<sup>46</sup>

Although I had landed in the ‘wrong’ university, I was in the ‘right’ department. UND (the right university) had a labour studies centre, a history of academic labour activism, and I knew several of its staff either personally or by name and reputation. It also had a white liberal tradition, mostly under-expressed until this became opportune<sup>47</sup> – in good part as a defence against opening up the university to Non-Whites. The other weapon used was that of ‘academic standards’, with the inappropriate model of Oxbridge in mind. UDW, which had actually been largely populated by Durban’s significant Asian community, was something of an ethnic battleground, involving the Asians, the White staff (I only saw one White student there in six months) and the incoming and upcoming Africans. The centre of this battleground, at least whilst I was there, was the Sociology Department.

I, however, was in Politics, chaired by the genial John Daniels, who I remembered from his exile at Zed Books in London. Not only did UDW have no labour studies tradition. The new majority Black students in the Politics Department knew nothing about unions: they came out of the squatter settlements, where having a unionised job was exceptional. They also knew little or nothing about the World, or Africa, and not too much about South Africa either. They had been the products of not only Bantu education but also of the boycott of this by the ANC or its allies, and the increasing breakdown of the whole Apartheid system. Unfortunately, I had offered an undergraduate course on international social movements. I had not been warned, far less warned-off. I was later given to understand that introductory courses in politics started with *maps*. But there was a generally friendly and committed atmosphere amongst the largely-White staff in Politics, who had also been training themselves in appropriate teaching methods. One had been doing research precisely on the backgrounds of the new

students. When asking if and where one student had done his school homework, the youngster said it had been under the kitchen table.

The problem in Sociology was one of virtual warfare between the new professor and his radical left colleagues, whether White or Asian. This might have not concerned me too much had I not been a friend and collaborator of the professor, Ronaldo Munck.<sup>48</sup> I do not want, even now, to go into the truly grimy details of the situation except to say that it was the local expression of all the tensions breaking out in South Africa in the Post-Apartheid period. And, for that matter, a precursor of worse to come. There was no sense of liberation at UDW, more one of muddling through, improvising and hoping against hope. Amongst those opposed to Ronnie were prominent White and Asian 'Trotskyists' and 'Ultra-Leftists' who had previously favoured his appointment.<sup>49</sup> These were political activists long critical of or opposed to the African National Congress (ANC) and its major allies, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). One of them happened to be a specialist on dockers. I had known him from his own visits to or exile in Europe. Accusations of racism, betrayal and collaboration with Apartheid police flew thick and fast. Ronnie and his family were eventually forced to first withdraw to a protected area within Durban and then to return to the UK.<sup>50</sup>

I got a tiny taster of such tensions on the Politics/Philosophy floor of our block, whilst asking a Black colleague to help me with a load of books in the lift, when I had both arms occupied with others. He accused me of treating him like a black servant. On the advice of White colleagues in Politics, I went and apologised. On visiting the university library, to consult a set of the *South African Labour Bulletin*, I found a situation infinitely worse than at Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria, in the early 1970s. Although listed in the catalogue, most of the series of the magazine were missing. A librarian explained: they had been stolen by students. When the library had tried to prevent students bringing bags into the library, or tried to check bags on leaving, the student body complained of racism. In any case, he told me, students would simply drop books out of the window, or bribe a guard. I was so depressed at the situation that I never went to the UDW library again. My best memory of UDW was a graduate seminar I ran for a handful of students interested in social movement research.

I did not really get to like Durban, despite its dramatic hilly and wooded site, its tropical beauty and its wonderful beaches. Driving down the main drag, the pedestrians changed colour, from Black to Brown to White. The White parts of Durban, like the one in which I resided, were a tropical English provincial town, complete with English-type road signs and bowling greens (or should that be Bowling Whites?). Black servants, nannies or guards wore uniform. When a *bakkie* (open-backed pick-up truck) smashed the rear lamp of my (Len's) car, the driver ran round to say 'Sorry, baas'. 'Forget it', I said, sick at heart at being so addressed. This was in no way like Nigeria, where Whites, however rich and powerful, were temporary visitors in a land run by richer and more powerful Nigerians. And somehow the busy city seemed empty. It was obviously not so. But it may well have been depressed, or at least suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Or at least from a condition of high uncertainty. Kwazulu-Natal had been one of only two provinces that had not voted ANC. It had a high percentage of Zulu voters and a considerable percentage of Asians. And both had reasons for fearing ANC rule. But the ANC's tripartite alliance was hardly in evidence. Durban had been the birthplace of the new unionism in South Africa in the 1970s. Now union offices were denuded, their officers recruited or promoted to industrial relations, administrative or government posts elsewhere.<sup>51</sup>

I increasingly noticed, at social events with my old White leftist friends, that there were few if any Blacks present. Even at an SACP social in Jo'burg, in a house as totally uncared for as that of a British

CP one in the London of the 1950s, the expected Black Communist politico didn't turn up. It later occurred to me that maybe the Blacks simply didn't need the White lefties any more. Not that there was some new reverse Apartheid, at least not on the left. But I was reminded of a strange exchange I had had with one of my *South African Labour Bulletin* friends in the 1980s. I had been writing about some anniversary of SALB and had mentioned that it now had more Black contributors than in its early years. 'We would rather you didn't say that, Peter', said my interlocutor. 'But it's true, isn't it? And it's meant to be complimentary'. 'Ye-e-s, I know, but I'd still rather you didn't say it'. There was also a problem insofar as many of the senior left academics were relatively young and thus human obstacles to Black academic advancement. This was to happen much later, I think, as with the graduate student, Sakhela Buhlungu, in SWOP, later to become co-director with Eddie of the diplomatically renamed Society, Work and Development Institute.<sup>52</sup>

It was, I think, only five years after my South African adventure that I admitted to myself – that I even *realised* – I had not enjoyed my six months in Durban. It had been simply too full of cross-cutting tensions. Its major saving grace was Nester Luthuli, the Suransky's domestic worker, who I had inherited. This was a woman of such spontaneity, self-confidence and eloquence that I had to think of my mother's South African friend, Lillian Ngoyi (Chapter 1). Nester was the single mother of two teenage schoolgirls, their father having been killed in a fight. She lived in a squatter settlement maybe one hour away by public transport. Since she only had to look after one tidy Englishman instead of four messy White South Africans, she had plenty of time to talk to me, and I had plenty of time to listen. Eventually I proposed that she come in two instead of five days a week. Same pay. On one occasion, my Peruvian feminist partner Gina (see Chapter 8) came for a couple of weeks. She arrived one evening. The next morning, Nester burst into the bedroom to give an equally surprised and delighted Gina a big hug. We were also invited to Nester's community and her house – not unfamiliar to Gina with her experience of the women's movement in Villa El Salvador – the Soweto of Lima. Nester had maybe a room and a half of a shack, rented from an Asian landlord. It was a breeze-block building with a corrugated iron roof. But what I remember about it was that there was nowhere to put our feet when we were sitting on her bed in the shack's main room.

Actually, I think Gina had a better experience in South Africa than I did. This was the year prior to the World Conference on Women of the UN, Beijing, 2005. I had begun by calling up feminist activists and feminists in Durban and Jo'burg. I would begin, 'You don't know me but ...'. And they would respond, 'Of course we know you, Peter'. It seemed that many prominent feminists had begun their academic careers in labour studies (the favoured discipline of White academic radicals under Apartheid?). So almost immediately after she arrived, we were down at some church centre in Durban, where the feminist journal, *Agenda*, had its office. Now, in three months I had had one or two puffs of *dagga* (cannabis). But in one day Gina had got a double handful of grass from the feminists. (When I asked for something similar later, I was pointed in the general direction of the docks, and advised that the best time to go there was at night). There was also a Beijing preparatory event in Durban, the women's movement having, apparently, not been demobilised by democratisation. Later we went to Jo'burg, where Gina was treated as a Very Important Feminist, with a seminar at the University of Witwatersrand, another Beijing preparatory event, and discussions with editors of another feminist publication. This one had, like many 'alternative' publications, been hit by withdrawal of the comparatively generous European funding of the Apartheid era. As far as the foreign funders were concerned, 'civil society was now in power' (to use the East European phrase after the collapse of Communism).

My best time in South Africa was in Jo'burg, which I visited twice. I had old friends there. These were, in the first place, Eddie Webster, of the Sociology of Work unit (SWOP), and with the *South African Labour Bulletin* (SALB, the Labour Bulletin). Eddie had been at the origin of Marxist labour studies, and associated with the labour upsurge in Durban in the 1970s. Now he was a professor, head of SWOP, and his wife, Luli Calinicos, was an internationally-respected social historian. I stayed at their place twice, once with Gina. Eddie, large, generous and blunt, was pondering the future of SWOP under the new dispensation. There was pressure and would be funding to provide services to the new state and to the nice new multi-racial corporations. The unions were now, moreover, partners of the ANC government and had their own nominated candidates in parliament. It was difficult to ponder with Eddie as he pounded round the local golf course, leaving me panting and puffing, far behind. My idea was to divide SWOP into two, one part providing services for the state and corporations, the other for labour and movements. This did not happen and whilst it may have retained its quality, and a reputation in the world of academic labour studies, SWOP lost, I think, much of its previously sharp critical political edge.

The *Labour Bulletin*, of which Eddie was a founder, had an office between – at least in my mind – the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) and the Northern Jo'burg bungalow of the Websters. I think the new office and staff had been already downsized. I had, over the years, contributed articles to the magazine. The *Labour Bulletin*, independent of both COSATU and academia, was in a similar quandary to SWOP. Was it to be a labour movement journal or an industrial relations one? In the event, I think, it has been both, though it has also retained its quality, its international coverage, and its openness to critical analyses and controversy. My idea, that SALB should become SAILB – a *South African and International Labour Bulletin* – was politely received but also ignored. My proposal had been intended to provide both a missing focal point for international(ist) labour studies and an international base for a labour movement journal confronted with a reduction in its foreign funding.<sup>53</sup>

I did not only stay in the (still) White northern suburbs. I also spent maybe one week with a former ISS student of mine, Jeremy Daphne, in Crown Mines Village. Jeremy – physically the ideal of a White South African male – had been very popular amongst the African and other students at ISS, both for his modesty and for his militancy. He had been active within COSATU on women worker's issues. Soweto might have been an even more binary opposite to Northern Jo'burg, but Crown Mines Village did quite well. It was originally a little settlement for White miners, built around 1900. It was surrounded by mine dumps, currently being reprocessed for tiny remnants of gold. Crown Mines Village was something like a rural village, with its now-decaying wooden cottages surrounded by greenery. Jeremy was the last White leftie there. Apparently it had been squatted by the adventurous young drop-out lefties, between the time of the White miners and the present ethnically-mixed villagers. His house was the only one I have ever even visited in which, when it rained, it would pour down the insides of the windows. If there was a meeting of the village committee in Jeremy's place, he would put away his audio-visual equipment. When I asked about security, Jeremy showed me a cricket bat next to his bed. Jeremy, however, was himself at this time moving from a job in the unions to one in the new industrial relations machinery. And, later, from Crown Mines Village to more salubrious accommodation. Having survived the village he was now hijacked with his car as he came out of his garage, taken to a remote area, stripped to his underwear, and finally – mercifully – tossed a few of his own rand for a taxi home. He spoke of this laconically when I asked him about it later.

Actually, it was whilst in Jeremy's car that I witnessed the one case of that urban mayhem which everyone warned me about whilst I was in South Africa. We were on a main road, on our way to the

airport, around four or five in the evening. I saw a Black guy, apparently begging at the window of a car driven by a White woman. Then he reached in to snatch her necklace and loped away. Instantly three or four White guys abandoned their cars and took chase. I was in shock: if they had caught him they would have beaten him – at the very least. I was trying to imagine the state of mind of a young Black guy prepared to take such a risk amongst Whites in broad daylight.

I had the habit, in Jo'burg, of walking from the city centre offices of the left magazines up to Wits, maybe two or three kilometres away. Buses were an unknown quantity and taxis expensive. The city centre was being abandoned by White businesses, which were taking off for new malls and office blocks in the Northern suburbs. It reminded me somewhat of Lima, the city centre of which had seemed to be likewise being abandoned for Miraflores, several kilometres away. Having been in Lima, Lagos and Calcutta, however, Jo'burg's city centre seemed to me no more threatening than any other Third World city. I found it shabby but lively. One day, however, a White woman leaned out of her car, to warn me – in French – that since I was obviously a tourist I was therefore a target. 'Merci, madame', I responded and continued on my risky way. I had and have never been robbed or attacked in any city, North, South, East, West. I was once threatened outside the Port, in Apapa, Lagos. But since I thought that was for political (i.e. union) rather than criminal reasons it was quickly forgotten. I know I have been lucky: family and friends have had much worse experiences. But avoiding all risks (as with those concerning street food) has its price too.

My visits to what, for a short time, was the shared premises of the alternative publications in South Africa, had to do with my research project. This was on the creation of a global solidarity culture in the new South Africa (Waterman 1995b, 2011). What it was actually about was internationalism in two major movement journals, 'a Labour Bulletin and a Feminist Agenda'. Given that the new South Africa was only a few months old by the time I left, the purpose of the research was inevitably speculative. But the content analysis of the two journals required me to develop relevant categories of internationalist coverage, and a methodology appropriate to the two rather different publications. The research also required an overview of the 'alternative' publications in the critical situation caused by the removal of West-European funding. Fortunately, I had the goodwill of the two relevant editorial boards. I could recover complete magazine series from dusty piles in offices about to be abandoned. And I got an extensive computerised index from the SALB. The abstract to the complete paper read:

The new South Africa is attempting to create a sense of national identity at the very moment when cultural globalisation is questioning not only traditional identities and values but also those of the modern nation-state. Yet the major forces (labour, nationalist, women, democratic, church, liberal) for the creation of the new South Africa have for decades been engaged with the ideas and practices of international solidarity. Two of the more-intellectual radical journals in South Africa – one labour/socialist, one women's/feminist – have demonstrated their particular understandings of the international during the Apartheid and transition period. These are examined in terms of 'approach' and 'style'. They reveal two advanced but also problematic models. Effective contribution to a global solidarity culture will require explicit theoretical reflection on both globalisation and communication. It will also require going beyond the two journals and their respective, separate, movements or constituencies.

Unfortunately, however, the end of Apartheid meant that the new South Africa was going to lose not only much of its alternative media but much of its interest in 'international solidarity'. So the

following implications of my paper were unlikely to be of much interest to the social movements in South Africa for some years:

1) that the progressive professional, technical, administrative and cultural categories can play an important role in advancing such a project; 2) that any alternative culture and communication project must also be present in both the dominant and popular cultural spaces; 3) that alternative culture and communication must be understood as part of the new global social movements; 4) that active participation in such a project requires a) interaction between sender and receiver, b) messages furthering interaction between the population and the professionals, c) accessibility of both form and content to the masses, d) public access to both production and distribution processes, e) participation in communication education structures, f) a public capable of criticising and correcting the media.

I was well-received in Jo'burg. I had some kind of reputation there as co-editor of that ageing book on radical African studies, as an old friend of the new unions (see Chapter 6), and even as a theorist! This was because of my initiating role in the South African debate around the concept/strategy of 'social movement unionism'. In Jo'burg I found the big city buzz congenial, if sometimes intimidating. Jeremy was able to introduce me to his comrades in the union offices. Eddie and Luli, a generation older than he, took me to Newtown, a lively cultural area, with a labour history museum and the famous Market Theatre. We were at this theatre when a multi-coloured party of ANC – now government – leaders was also visiting. They positively threw off sparks. The Websters knew them and introduced me to the 'Red Pimpernel', Ronnie Kasrils. Ronnie, a tough Jewish kid from Yeovil, Jo'burg, had not only been a leading figure in the underground political, military and intelligence struggle. He had also just published an account of this (Kasrils 1993) that I had read. And he was, now, Deputy Defence Minister of the brand new South African regime. I was charmed to meet this energetic Jewish Communist adventurer, whilst sceptical about his own presentation of the adventures. These had inevitably involved intimate relations with dubious Communist regimes that had just been swept away by a wave of 'people power' not entirely unrelated to that which had brought the ANC, the SACP and COSATU into power. Now, it takes one to know one, and Ronnie knew I was another Red Jew (if not a pimpernel; if of a greener shade of red). 'Why don't you come and join us?', he said. He evidently couldn't imagine why anyone on the left would want to be anywhere else than this promised land at that moment. By 2004, Ronnie Kasrils had been appointed Minister for Intelligence Services in the corrupt neo-liberal ANC regime of Thabo Mbeki. Of course I could not have imagined this. But neither did I have too many illusions about the 'national-democratic' phase following any heroic liberation struggle.

There remained, however, the left critics of the new regime. What of these? I had met some of them in Durban. I knew of others from publications. Whilst in Jo'burg, mid-1994, I was invited to a conference at which this left was to re-shape itself for the new epoch. I was torn between wanting to be at this historic event and, simultaneously, to be 600 km away in Durban. With a little help from my restricted air ticket, I took the easy option. Reports suggested that the meeting was a dis-encounter, with each groupuscule noisily claiming the vanguard role. My feeling was that the left should abandon the attempt to reach agreement amongst its fractured selves and rather address itself – its selves – to those movements and protests that were continuing in the new South Africa. Over the next decade this was to occur. Though not, obviously, because I had said so in 2004.

## Conclusion: Do Principles Have a Price?

Throughout my life I had always wanted to make this dramatic farewell speech, in which I courageously denounced whatever institution it was that I was now happily leaving – school, employer, army, university, party. I never had the opportunity. Or perhaps I never had the guts to have the opportunity. I did, June 18 1998. That is: I got the opportunity, in the Arrivals/Departures bar of the ISS. Much of what I said then has been already expressed. Or will be below and even in the title of the next chapter. I also proposed that the ISS should shift its focus from development to globalisation, whilst expressing my scepticism of any such transformation. This, I suggested, was due to, firstly, the ISS's own 'dependency' problem and, secondly or consequently, because the Netherlands had no Ministry of Globalisation.

The three farewell messages I received all came from feminists I had met and/or worked with at the Institute. My old friend, Than-Dam Truong, author of a pioneering study on sex-tourism, presented hers at the farewell ceremony. Since I didn't really get appreciation for my work within ISS, since TD and I do not share our subjects or even approaches, and since we had and have our occasional fights, I really valued this. She said in part:

You have remained faithful in your commitment to social movements. An early alliance between yourself and [Women and Development] is not surprising. However ... this alliance is not an easy one, but one full of tension. The women expect the men from the left to look critically into their own masculinity as they have done with femininity. The men expect the women to join forces with them and keep their discussions on femininity and masculinity to themselves. [...] I remember at one point how your 'idée fixe' labelled 'internationalism' drove all of us up ... the wall. Peter could not speak of anything but yet ... another formulation of internationalism. You continuously and tirelessly tried to find a new way of expressing international solidarity in theory and practice.[...] Definitely, we have moved beyond the period of 'your movement or mine?', 'your paradigm or mine'. We have much to learn from you to overcome this critical period 'your staffgroup or mine'. [...] To me, you represent a traditional type of scholar known in Vietnamese society in the past, namely the one who pursue[s] knowledge without losing sight of wisdom and affection as essential elements in this pursuit. The quest for power and recognition is left to others.

I could not have dreamed of a more generous tribute on leaving. It moved my young friend, Anissa Helie, now also elsewhere, to tears. One former woman friend, emailed from the US that I was 'a fucking good guy'. And Gina wrote that she was *emocionada*, and how much she appreciated my *complicidad* with the women's movement. From another old friend and W&D colleague, Amrita Chhachhi, I got a large diploma of 'Global Citizenship', in the cause of

Supporting colleagues and participants against unfair dismissal, sexual harassment / social movements for workers' rights, women's rights, peasants' rights, for transcending narrow nationalism with a humanist internationalism / peace and disarmament, linking the personal and the political, theory and action, academic contribution with political commitment, for boring holes in ivory towers and opening windows to the real and virtual world of globalisation and cyberspace.

I don't think I have ever had so many nice things said to me in my life. Which is, of course, why I reproduce them here.

I may have already suggested that during my career at the ISS 'I did it my way'. I never had a very high opinion of myself as an academic. Nor of the Institute as a grove (rather than a grave) of academe. Whilst I have evidently been politically engaged since my childhood, I do feel that it was also a certain lack of confidence in my own academic capacities that encouraged me to be active elsewhere. But, in any case, after my experience with Communism, I never seem to have been unconditionally attached to any institution or organisation I have worked in or for. I was here clearly endorsing some qualified version of the Marxist principle: 'I do not want to be a member of any club that accepts people like me as members'.<sup>54</sup> I also seem to have had a problem with committee meetings, not just Communist ones. I recall timing the Chair of an ISS Master's Committee and then informing him that he had spoken for 50 percent of the total time of the meeting. It tamed him for just one more. But, for my temerity, I was then press-ganged into myself chairing the same committee for one ghastly year. I reduced my role to nodding things through. It could have been embarrassing if anyone had asked me *what* I was steering around the room and into the minutes. Particularly since the poor secretary trained to take these minutes was as incompetent as its members and its chairperson. My general feeling was that the Institute was using me for its nefarious purposes and that it was therefore OK for me to use it for mine. I was, however, dumb enough to say so to my colleagues in Labour and Development, apparently employing here not the word 'using' but 'ripping off'. Well, not apparently: definitely. This colourful and colloquial expression was then reportedly used by these same colleagues in a document they submitted to the Institute in their attempt to rid themselves of me. But was this 'bad attitude' toward our employer not also the case for all but the most loyal or subordinate of us?

I think I was actually amongst the less-exploitative staff. Another was said to have used ISS funding to put his son through private school. When I expressed shock, a colleague accused me of naïvety. Possibly true, since I had always assumed that if one was politically conformist *and* well-paid for being so, the motivation for personal corruption would be absent. Or surplus to requirements. Who, observing national and international political leaders, would be today so naïve? And when, after twenty years at the ISS, that other colleague made that remark about a certain lack of coincidence between my research interests and those of the Institute, it again gave me cause for thought. 'Well', I said, 'it's really a matter of swings and roundabouts: on the one hand I have no one to talk to about my work and on the other, no one bugs me about it'. This points to the positive side of my quarter-century at the ISS; that it tolerated me. This was not only after I was expelled from the paradise of labour studies and implicitly given a year to find somewhere else to justify my existence there. But also in funding a lot of my development-dysfunctional research, and in paying me enough to be able to fund my own research when – occasionally – the Institute, or its Research Officer, would refuse.

Some years after I had left the Institute, I had to correct an old friend and colleague who had listed me for a conference as Professor Waterman. I told him that I had never got beyond the grade of Senior Lecturer. But when the Institute had introduced a procedure for promotion to the Dutch equivalent of Reader, one of the conditions was 'services to the Institute'. This clearly meant sitting in committees, raising research funds from outside, being on the boards of development cooperation instances, or doing ritualised consultancies and evaluations for national and international development agencies. And, of course, thinking and speaking well of the ISS. I *had* made one half-hearted effort to argue that my Newsletter and multifarious extramural activities were – in the American word 'outreach' – a

service to the Institute, but since I was not myself convinced this was so, there was no reason the ISS would be.

When the Institute started converting immeasurable academic qualities into arithmetical quantities, this implied so many working days per year for teaching, so many for research, administration, etc. And whilst many of my colleagues rushed around the Institute like academic Stakhanovites, over-fulfilling their quotas, my annual anxiety was to demonstrate I had fulfilled the *minimum* teaching days. Given, however, that various *other* colleagues had done no research, alongside little teaching, and never published as much as a book review, no one ever called me to account for this. Then, around maybe 1990, the Institute, or Ministry – or the Dutch who had created Holland – decided to offer academics semi- and early-retirement. The semi-retirement option was expressed as two days a week. Despite my weakness in the higher mathematics – anything higher than about ten – I was able to do the sum: I took 52 (or 48?), multiplied by two, added the four weeks, or whatever, annual vacation, plus all my untaken vacation days, and ... *abracadabra* ... six months free per year! After one or two of these half years, my colleagues complained that this was not working out for the programme. I could understand their point of view. I then took the early-retirement option, though not without trepidation as big as an elephant. My nervousness had to do with my longtime understanding of the self. Or at least of that self which was me: ‘I have a job, therefore I am’. Early-retirement meant having to redefine this self. The anxiety was hardly assuaged by being combined with a fuck-off premium. This compensated to some extent for my having worked at the ISS for only some twentyseven years, rather than forty – or whatever the requirement was for a full pension.

And, oh, yes, that price of principles ....

I had followed some explicit or implicit principles in my quarter century at the ISS. I don’t think they cost me very much. I zigged and I zagged. And those principles certainly changed over the quarter-century. After all, I had entered it as an ex-Leninist but a convinced Marxist. And, at the end of my time there, I was calling myself ‘someone of the Marxist tradition’ (an accurate description), or a ‘Liberation Marxist’ (in reference to Liberation Theologists). And, if not an energetic careerist, with an eye nailed to research fashion and the research guild, I certainly served an institute, profession and state that I repeatedly critiqued, if not condemned. As I was leaving the Institute, I made a suggestion to its Executive that they grant me, and other retirees, a status as ‘attached researcher’, or whatever, on a ‘closed purse’ basis.<sup>55</sup> ‘No’, said the Rector, ‘We are not going down that path’. Oh!? True, the Institute had had some bad experience, from its easier-going days, with one or two ex-staff who were permitted to hang around, with or without pay. But I was not one of these hangers-on, and I was proposing a written but cost-free contract, which would also oblige me to provide services on request. If, however, the Institute was going to thus get some free services from retired staff, I was not going to be such a one. It turned out that the ISS was not only disembarassing itself of me, but my courses. The long decline in programmes to do with social movements or emancipation continued.<sup>56</sup> In practice, the ISS was prepared to allow me certain services – library, computer, pigeonhole – all of which I appreciated and have made use of. But I had to recognise that insofar as I had used the place to my advantage, I could hardly complain if it was now using my absence to its own.

Deprived of a physical place to practise my internationalism I was more or less condemned to do so in cyberspace.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A puzzled, if perceptive, ISS colleague, 20 years too late....

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.democraticcommunications.net/>. During the 1980s, I thought that UDC was suffering in the post-1968 depression. It seemed to be confined to the academics who, brilliant though many were, were quite isolated from movements. However, it seems to have survived and thrived. See more on the UDC below.

<sup>3</sup> Long after I left the ISS, I found that all its *Working Papers* had been scanned and made available online. Thus all my nineteen from 1986 on could be found at <http://ideas.repec.org/cgi-bin/htsearch?q=waterman&ul=%2Fems%2Feuriss>. Later I republished them, with an introduction (Waterman 2011a).

<sup>4</sup> Don died, shockingly young, of cancer, but had a nice little collection dedicated to him (Press and Thomson 1989), with an acknowledgement from us at NILS. And before Rodney disappeared back to the US, I got from him a hefty 'liberated' file of original correspondence between the AFL-CIO and the US State Department, now deposited with the International Institute of Social Studies in Amsterdam.

<sup>5</sup> Dave became a leading figure in the British, European and International Workers Education Association. He was also on the Steering Committee of Women in Informal Employment Globalising and Organising (WIEGO) which gives him a longer CV:

**Dave Spooner** has a background in education and writing on international trade unionism, and the use of internet technologies for international solidarity. In the 1980s he worked with trade unions in north-west England on transnational corporations, factory closures and unions in the South, co-founded International Labour Reports magazine, worked for the Hong Kong-based Asia Labour Monitor, returning to England in 1989 to work for Manchester City Council. He became International Programmes Officer for the UK Workers' Education Association in 1993 and Secretary of Euro-WEA in 1995. He was elected General Secretary of IFWEA in 2003. During his time with the WEA he worked closely with the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions in developing education work to support informal economy workers, and has subsequently been involved in similar work elsewhere in Southern Africa and in Asia. He was commissioned to join the British Government delegation to the ILC discussions on the informal economy in 2002, and has written on informal economy questions for the UK Department for International Development, the ILO and trade union and NGO publications. He has been a member of the WIEGO ORP Advisory Committee since 2000. <http://wiego.org/wiego/organization-representation-programme-advisory-committee>.

Still later, Dave set up a new centre, the Global Labour Institute, UK, <http://global-labour.net/>, associated with the GLI of veteran international unionist, Dan Gallin, in Geneva. Celia, as I have mentioned, is a researcher/consultant on international labour issues. Stuart became Deputy General Secretary of the International Transportworkers Federation. Mike Allen may have been the only one to have seriously turned his coat, ending up in the USA with a short-lived and corporate-sponsored Global Alliance of Workers and Communities, and a visiting position at the state-funded National Endowment for Democracy – with an apparent interest in social partnership.

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps personifying the quest and the pilgrim would be the brilliant Canadian academic/activist, John Saul (2009). John pursued the grail from Tanzania in the 1960s-70s to ever-more southern parts of Africa in the 1980s-2000s. In his own autobio, entitled significantly, *Revolutionary Traveller*, he admits to the failure of the radical-or socialist-national projects in the continent, and his own errors of judgement and looks forward to a 'second liberation', based on a more-sophisticated and broader notion of socialism and social transformation, taking into account the newest wave of social movements. For my earlier disagreements with John Saul, see Chapter 6.

<sup>7</sup> This reminds me of the Soviet collective farmer, following a compulsory lecture from a visiting Party official. The latter had repeatedly said that Communism was on the horizon. During question-time, the farmer asked the lecturer the meaning of the word 'horizon'. 'The horizon', said the official, 'is an imaginary line separating the earth and the heavens that retreats as you advance towards it'.

<sup>8</sup> The group dated back to 1966 and was clearly trying to provide a theoretical basis for, or to expand, the space opened up by the Yugoslav split with Soviet Communism. Many of its prominent leaders had been also prominent in the Resistance and/or educated in the West. This gave them certain moral and intellectual resources lacking in their opposite numbers in, for example, Czechoslovakia (where they had been largely repressed). See further <http://www.marxists.org/subject/praxis/index.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> In an issue of *Praxis* (1974) on my shelves, I find contributions by two of the dissident Yugoslav Marxists I met, Mihailo Marković and Srđan Vrcan. *Praxis*, with its international contributors and Board of Supporters, was an early and even unique attempt to create an intellectual community of socialist intellectuals across the East-West divide. Insofar as solidarity with the Belgrade professors was expressed by Noam Chomsky, a line can even be traced from here to the global justice movement of the twentyfirst century, see

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/9609>.

<sup>10</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihailo\\_Markovi%C4%87](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihailo_Markovi%C4%87).

<sup>11</sup> Ofelia had written a joint paper with Rhoda Reddock whilst both were students of mine (Gómez de Estrada and Reddock 1987). This was another socialist-feminist piece. It was published, together with a piece by Ken Post and bibliographical contributions by myself, in one of those compilations which represented the ‘new international labour studies’ of the 1980s.

<sup>12</sup> Chhaya later came to the Institute, where she was a student of Maria Mies in the Women and Development Programme. She pursued her academic and activist career, ending up as a professor of women’s studies in Mumbai. [http://www.imahal.com/interviews/chhaya\\_06\\_00/biography.htm](http://www.imahal.com/interviews/chhaya_06_00/biography.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Palme Dutt was famous, in India as well as the UK for his books on India, particularly, I think, for one I recall from its left Book Club edition (Palme Dutt 1940). More recently he has been castigated for his Stalinism (Callaghan 1993).

<sup>14</sup> This he later brilliantly achieved. <http://www.carleton.ca/polisci/?s=dutkie&submit=>.

<sup>15</sup> Aleksander Smolar, another Polish Jewish leftist, later followed Henryk’s move to the Polish and international right, becoming Director of the Stefan Batory Foundation and rubbing shoulders with such fellow democrats as Madeleine Albright. [http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksander\\_Smolar](http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksander_Smolar).

<sup>16</sup> Henryk continued to research over a wide spectrum, and to publish in Polish and English. He co-edited, with Maria and another colleague, an English-language collection on the famous Polish dissident journal, *Krytika* (Bernhard, Chmielewska-Szlajfer and Szlajfer 1995). Indeed, he told me over the phone around 2004 that he had just published a controversial book on Polish Jews (Szlajfer 2003). But Henryk was by now moving from international studies to foreign affairs, the UN and – eventually – to nomination as Polish ambassador to the United States. At this possibility, in 2005, he became subject of the anti-Communist witchhunt building up in an increasingly reactionary and clerical Poland <http://www.pogonowski.com/display.php?textid=64> (the witchhunt being energetically supported from ultra-conservative Poles in the USA). This raised now publicly the accusation that he had collaborated with the Communist authorities in 1968. He responded, rejecting the accusation, but eventually withdrew his candidacy. It appears, however, that no one seems to have considered his interest in representing a marginal neo-liberal state to the mother of them all a cause for criticism or even comment.

<sup>17</sup> The echoes of this Western left identification with – or mythologisation of – *Solidarność* were to be found, paradoxically enough, in the on-line academic-activist e-journal, *Interface*, several decades later. I say paradoxically insofar as *Interface* is primarily an expression – admittedly a pluralistic one – of the new global social movements and theories of the 2000s. Here Colin Barker, a veteran of the Socialist Workers Party in the UK, leaps from a sophisticated analysis of *Solidarność* as a social movement to a startling ideological conclusion: that if there had been in Poland at that time a revolutionary vanguard movement, there could have been some kind of socialist revolution. For my startled-cum-sceptical reaction and Colin’s response see <http://interfacejournal.nuim.ie/?p=1339>.

<sup>18</sup> The ICFTU’s ‘Solidarity with *Solidarność*’ under Communism receives a meagre two pages in the *historia oficial* of the ICFTU (v.d.Linden 2000:498-9). The extent to which the ICFTU and its affiliates were part of or linked with the old AFL-CIO-CIA connection is at least suggested in a book on the plot to kill the Polish pope. (West 2001:161-2, 196, 207-8). For a vivid, if long-delayed, account of another case of clandestine international union solidarity with *Solidarność*, see McShane (2005). For what one Western union movement was doing in relation to *Solidarność*, see Misgeld (2010)

<sup>19</sup> In 2013, in Lima, I purchased a pirated copy of the Spanish-dubbed Polish film, ‘*Popieluszko*’, who was eventually and inevitably beatified by the Catholic Church. Watching the movie, which is what one might call Catholic Realist style, it becomes evident that the Church in Poland played the role of the vanguard party in the struggle for the overthrow of Communism. For more on *Popieluszko*, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerzy\\_Popie%C5%82uszko](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerzy_Popie%C5%82uszko).

<sup>20</sup> PILER, for the creation of which Karamat gives me some credit, was still in existence decades later, <http://piler.org.pk/>.

<sup>21</sup> For many years now Harsh has been responsible for the Labour Notes South Asia List, [lnsa-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:lnsa-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

<sup>22</sup> I have tried to check with Karamat, unsuccessfully, about whether he said one million or only, maybe, 500,000, but it was certainly a multiple of British miners at that time.

- <sup>23</sup> Zafar went to work for the ILO in Geneva, following in the footsteps of his father. Despite all urgings, he did not publish his competent PhD for several decades (Shaheed 2007). This study really belongs to the new international labour studies of the 1980s. In its acknowledgements it refers to Karamat, to Amrita and to PILER.
- <sup>24</sup> The *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*, universally known as the APRA, was founded by Victor Haya de la Torre in the 1920s. It was still, in the 1980s, the only party in Peru that was much more than a *groupuscule* or an electoral alliance. Despite its revolutionary pretensions and an uprising organised in 1932, the party was and is notorious for its ideological swings, political opportunism and clientalism.
- <sup>25</sup> Not her real name. We later (re)established a cordial relationship, if not a close one. I used to see her occasionally on later visits to Lima. She had a group of friends in Holland who helped her during her eventually fatal illness. In 2006, twenty years after our dis-encounter in Lima, I attended her funeral.
- <sup>26</sup> Rafo, who I would meet occasionally over following decades was, 2012, the Foreign Minister of Peru. This was under the presidency of Ollanta Humala, who had previously sacked the leftist or leftish ministers of his initial government. I preferred Rafo in his 1986 incarnation. The international human-rights NGO for which he had previously worked was, however, delighted with his appointment
- <sup>27</sup> Twenty years later, most of these Peruvians are still around and mostly on the left, or at least centre-left. Denis, seriously affected by a neuro-generative illness, remains intellectually active. Roelfien is active in MUDE (Women for Democracy). Nebiur, I regret, abandoned Peru for the US and sociology for art, producing beautiful printed textiles with Peruvian themes. Some of the *Floras* (women working for Flora Tristán) I met in 1986, were still there twenty years later, notably Nancy Palomino, Cecilia Olea and Diana Miloslavich. Jonathon Cavanagh, long resident in Peru, was involved with an English-language press agency there, and later produced a splendid cookery book (which I regularly consult), as well as reports on drugs and mining. The hyper-active Mario Padron, unfortunately, had a heart problem and died very young, around 1990.
- <sup>28</sup> A quarter century later what remained of this left had finally got round to at least licking its wounds (see Adrianzén 2012 and the rather critical review of this by Moya 2012). The thriving left media scene had long disappeared. And the new radical-democratic online media had only marginal relations with the traditional left (consider <http://www.democraciaglobal.org/>).
- <sup>29</sup> Just as some Peruvian leftists, tongue in cheek, refer to Gramsci as ‘the Italian Mariátegui’.
- <sup>30</sup> The name was not just an anti-racist gesture in highly-racist Lima. Mariátegui wrote on the Indian question and, unlike most Marxists elsewhere, considered the struggle of the indigenous peoples revolutionary.
- <sup>31</sup> I also co-translated it, for the first time, into English in my newsletter. Twenty years later I worked it into the title of a book, in which the Spanish original was appended (Waterman 2006a). All this was, apparently, to little avail. Because, twenty years later, and despite my forwarding the translation to the editor of the Mariátegui pages on the Marxist Internet Archive, it awaits addition (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/mariategui/works/index.htm>). This shortcoming has fortunately been compensated for in an edited compilation of Mariátegui’s writings (Vanden and Becker 2011).
- <sup>32</sup> This was an explanation offered me decades later by one Peruvian colleague. I would additionally put down the decline to the increasing incorporation of workers, unions and the left into national structures of negotiation, representation and welfare (limited as these might have been). In other words, the decline in a meaningful internationalism here parallels what occurred over the same period elsewhere internationally.
- <sup>33</sup> For which see <http://www.iamcr.org/>.
- <sup>34</sup> Twenty to twentyfive years later, they were clearly familiar with the web <http://www.coordinadora.org/>. The same is evidently true for what now had a definite name, the International Dockworkers Council <http://www.dockworkers.org/index.php?lang=spanish>. But despite continuing strikes and solidarity activities, I see no evidence on their attractive and informative sites that they have advanced beyond the alternative international labour communications understandings and practices they had achieved during the 1980. See, however, the paper of Monica Clua Losada (2012), which in many ways updates and improves on my own research here.
- <sup>35</sup> For seriously different accounts, see Scipes (1996), politically identified with the KMU and West (1997), sympathetic but critical.
- <sup>36</sup> <http://archive.iire.org/iire.html>. I am not going here to explain which of a dozen or more claimants to the title of the Fourth

International this was. This was all made wittily clear in a British booklet I have lost, entitled, unforgettably, 'Go Fourth and Multiply!'. It can be found, however, online, though this reproduction loses the period flavour of the original, <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/critiques/sullivan/fourth-index.htm>. The Fourth I am referring to is the one associated with the respected Belgian Marxist political-economist, Ernest Mandel. As well as with the magazine *International Viewpoint* (IV = four in Latin). Check it out at <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/index.php>.

37 I recall, on one occasion, visiting the IIRE whilst Mandel was teaching there. Pierre, gesturing to the next room, said, 'You know, Peter, Ernest is very angry with you'. Since I had never met the man, I asked why. 'Because of those two working papers, of course'. 'Pierre', I responded, 'I only wrote them: *you* published them!' I would like to imagine that by such papers, and other discussions with Pierre about internationalism, I might have contributed to the continuing conversion of the Fourth from being the vanguard of the imaginary internationalist proletariat into a not insignificant partner of the World Social Forum.

38 <http://www.solair.upd.edu.ph/>.

39 For recent evidence of the identification of the 'National Democratic' project with the CPP, and with Joma Sison as its Cultivated Individual, see its website, <http://www.ndfp.net/web2014/index.php/news/59-news/1983-ndfp-hosts-celebration-of-prof-sisons-55-years-of-service-to-the-filipino-people>. Or to consider its attack on Pierre Rousset, who had denounced human rights abuses by the CPP/NDF, <http://home.casema.nl/ndf/archive/2005/archive0012.html>.

40 Later deposited, with many other such files, at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam <http://www.iisg.nl/archives/en/files/w/10916413full.php>.

41 Propagation of the faith has, of course, a long history and a complex nature. The left, unfortunately, has often reproduced the mode, considering that all that was necessary was to substitute 'their' evil propaganda by 'our' virtuous one. For more, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda#Herman\\_and\\_Chomsky.27s\\_propaganda\\_model](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda#Herman_and_Chomsky.27s_propaganda_model).

42 A Filipina informant of mine made frequent use of this argument despite having made a complete break with the CPP, largely on the grounds of its authoritarianism. She had once been responsible for supposedly clandestine or at least confidential, work abroad. She was appalled when I showed her Party documentation in which she was identified and geographically placed not by some pseudonym or even initials but by her real first name.

43 <http://www.kilusangmayouno.org/>.

44 I borrow here, tongue in cheek, from the SACP and ANC notion of Apartheid South Africa as representing 'colonialism of a special type'. But Post-Apartheid South Africa certainly revealed post-colonial traits familiar to me from Nigeria. And these have been dramatically and disastrously increasing in the intervening decades. See Waterman (2012).

45 I am here capitalising White, as well as Jewish, and, since this is South Africa, I will capitalise Black, Asian, Indian, European, Coloured, etc. This might have been disputed usage even at that time, but at least readers will recognise the terms.

46 Still later they left South Africa for the Netherlands. Even later, they separated, but Len returned to South Africa and Caroline spent her time between there and the Netherlands.

47 This dramatic rise of White liberalism might be compared to the 'January Second Movement' in Cuba, 1959 (the Revolution had taken Havana on January 1).

48 Ronnie is actually of Argentinean origin, though university educated in the UK and at that time teaching in British-occupied Northern Ireland, or Ulster. Ronnie, who operates academically over a wide social and geographic range, was also a labour specialist and shared my interest in international labour and labour internationalism. He seems to write almost as fast as I read, producing one or more books a year. He has a capacity for synthesis, and for writing well-structured arguments in excellent English – something one cannot say for all Anglophone academics. Our major collaborative effort was Munck and Waterman (1999). Mostly publishing in English, he has more recently had some of his work translated into Spanish (Munck 2002, 2012)

49 For a contemporary newspaper account, see <http://mg.co.za/article/1995-10-13-its-spy-vs-spy-at-udw>.

50 Fortunately, the warring parties survived and continued more productive careers, whether in South Africa, or, in the case of both Ronnie and his wife, Honor Fagan, in Ireland. Ronnie and I continue to occasionally collaborate and to occasionally dispute, fruitfully, with each other.

51 Some two decades later, Ashwin Desai reports what happened with unions in Durban and what followed shortly thereafter:

Teaching at the Durban Workers College at the time, I saw a swift change in the role of trade union shop stewards. Where a few months before they were pushing back the frontiers of control on the shopfloor, organising mass marches, and confronting the bosses, now they were spending time negotiating the retrenchments of hundreds of workers, while at the same time preaching discipline and order in the workplace. Overnight, unions were working with the bosses to encourage international competitiveness, as if 50 years of protection could be made up for in a year.

COSATU promoted a “Buy South Africa Campaign”. Yet, because of the influence of COSATU stalwart turned minister Alec Erwin, the union movement had signed on to the lowering of tariff barriers. Now it insisted that South Africans buy more expensive local products as their patriotic duty. At one union rally, when workers realised they were wearing T-shirts made in China, they took them off and ripped them up. At least the seams came apart easily.

While it may have seemed a futile gesture, it was a window into the effects that the summary embrace of economic openness had produced without concomitant state support or a coherent industrial policy. We, who had been isolated from the world during apartheid, were now rushed at breakneck speed into the embrace of global competitiveness. People who bore the crushing weight of apartheid were now asked to bear the burden of shock capitalism. Once more, the call went out from on high; patience and discipline. <http://louisproyect.org/2013/12/08/nelson-mandelas-long-walk/>.

52 Interestingly, Sakhela was later to write a piece on my White left labour studies friends, this resulting in considerable controversy (Buhlungu 2006). Later he published a brilliant critical study of COSATU since the end of Apartheid, to which COSATU responded in classical bureaucratic defence/attack mode.

53 It occurs to me, a couple of decades later, that ‘South African and International’ would be a fair categorisation of the Debate List, based at the Centre for Civil Society, Durban. This, however, was a post-Apartheid project, autonomous of the new hegemonic forces in South Africa.

54 Groucho Marx, of course.

55 This is a Dutch term, supposedly appealing to the parsimonious Dutch heart, meaning ‘no cost’.

56 In 2013 the ISS was, however, introducing a new specialisation, if not a complete programme, on social movements

57 The significance of a presence on the web is still difficult to evaluate. For academia, in the past, this would probably be understood as worse than having recognition in Siberia, since Cyberia is literally nowhere. On the other hand, of course, traditional indicators of academic prowess have more to do with rituals of faith and conformity to convention than social impact or, of course, contribution to global social emancipation. The commonest measure – and one presumably still applied to or within the ISS – is publication in a ‘peer-reviewed academic journal’. Or a certain number of such, recognised by the relevant ideological hegemons. There are also academic ‘citation indices’, measuring how many times *other* academics have referred to such recognised academic authorities. I have no access to these, so I am obliged to make use of a related function on Google. It may be that it is since I left the Institute and stopped worrying about peer-reviewed publication that my Googlemeter scores have increased.

## CHAPTER 8

# Real Virtuality, 1998-?: Globalised Localities, Solidarities, Cyberspaces

## Exploring Cyberia

I had been engaged with alternative international computer use since before my first ISS Working Paper on the topic (Waterman 1985). In Lima, 1995, I had my 'Eureka!' moment when, after fiddling on a computer for twenty minutes, I got my slashes the right way round and discovered ... the World Wide Web! One of the last things I did at the Institute had been a long review of the three-volume masterwork by Manuel Castells on the 'Information Age' (Waterman 1999b). I was not happy with his 1950s-type refusal to descend from an academic pedestal (which he had done, outside his book, to consult for various real-world neo-liberal regimes), and I was only partly convinced by his radical downgrading of the labour movement:

Castells writes off the old labour movement too easily. And he tends to give the women's and sexual rights ones the image previously accorded by socialists to labour. He here reproduces the much-criticised New Social Movement theory opposition between interest and identity, old and new. The admittedly old labour movement was as concerned with values, ideas, images and utopias as the admittedly new – or renewed – women's movement. Most women's movements are intensely engaged with women's interests (and feminists with argument about them). Conversely, there are signs of movement within the labour movement internationally ... I am thinking of moments, movements, and even organisations, that are beginning to respond to the new social subjects, new social issues and new social movements that Castells identifies ... [T]here is beginning to be a new body of writing which 1) recognises the general situation Castells so graphically portrays, 2) is in agreement on the necessary articulation or imbrication of labour and the newer social movements, but which 3) argues for the possibility of, and necessity for, what we might call a 'new social labour movement', that relates to an informatised and globalised capitalism .... This is, after all, the only international social movement that consists of poor *and increasingly impoverished* people, and which is customarily led by people of this same low-class social origin. If we fail to address them, they will be 'identified' either by right-wing fundamentalists (as in France, India or Poland) or by left-wing ideologues who, if not fundamentalist, are tilting at the windmills of an earlier capitalism.

However, I was both convinced and inspired by his argument that we were undergoing a capitalist revolution that was much more than that:

It is in Castells' chapter about the media that we begin to see that what could be conceived of as a development *within capitalism* is, simultaneously, an *epochal* transformation. The present integration of most modes of communication into a meta-language, combining the

written, oral and audiovisual, is compared by Castells to the invention of the alphabet in Greece, 2,700 years ago! That technical revolution led simultaneously to the possibility of conceptual discourse and to a separation/hierarchy, in which the word of the intellectual and scientist were privileged over the sound and image of the emotional, the ritual and the popular (at least by the intellectual and scientist). There is here at least a suggestion that we are moving toward a re-combination not only of these modes of expression or communication but also a re-encounter between the classes or categories that began to be divided nearly three thousand years ago. In some areas this is already occurring, as the specialists of the (emancipatory) word begin to be replaced by those of the (emancipatory) image.

Unfortunately, my feeling for and even understanding of the emancipatory potential of cyberspace was not matched by more than the basic computer skills. So it was a hard enough effort for me to create, in Cyberia, even the emancipatory word, far less the emancipatory image.

I did at this time set up one or two personal electronic lists or sites. The first was called GloSoDia (global solidarity dialogue), now disappeared. Possibly because it required membership, but anyway, because of the amount of work involved in uploading, I let it fall into disuse. The second was also called – confusingly – Global Solidarity Dialogue.<sup>1</sup> This was still up at time of writing. It was designed and redesigned by my multi-talented former student, Daniel Chavez.<sup>2</sup> It carried the texts of two of my print books, in draft, thus circumventing or surpassing the high cost and limited reach of the traditional published work. Along with my own material the site carried an equal amount of that of others. Despite its praiseworthy pluralism, however, it never established itself as a site for the desired dialogue. It likewise ran out of steam. Another experiment reversed – sort of – the roles between Daniel and myself, since it was his initiative to create an online magazine for the Transnational Institute (TNI) in Amsterdam and I was the adviser/assistant or whatever. *Transnational Alternatives/Alternativas Transnacionales* (it had other hypothetical names) was launched at a World Social Forum (2002 or 2003) but never surpassed its experimental No. 0, in 2002, being, I think, somewhat over-ambitious in concept.

Reducing my ambitions to fit my capacities, I made contributions to lists and sites of others. These have been most voluminous with respect to the South African list, Debate.<sup>3</sup> My attachment to this particular place/space in Cyberia has only partly to do with my old and occasional South African connections. It has more to do, I think, with the fact that Debate was one of the few movement-orientated but pluralistic lists that gave equal attention to its socio-geographic place (a home country) and its virtual space (an emerging and diverse set of social movements, linked precisely through the web). My affiliation (if one can use this institutional term for an internet relationship) is also due to the main man behind this combined operation, Patrick Bond.<sup>4</sup> Patrick, born in Northern Ireland, 1961, is a decade or two too young to be considered a member of the 1968 generation. But he seems to have carried that spirit with him to the US, Zimbabwe and South Africa. I have met him several times in South Africa and at World Social Forums, of which he has been an energetic and critical supporter. I once said of him at such a Forum: ‘My name is Bond. Patrick Bond. Give me a bourgeois nationalist, shaken, not stirred.’ I did not realise that the said Patrick was right behind me. At the Centre for Civil Society, Durban, Patrick seems to have brought or held together a multi-racial team of remarkable productivity, whilst also forging relations with many of the new social movements in South Africa. A remarkable balancing act really. And whilst the Debate lists still seems to be over-populated by Middle-Aged White Guys, whether inside or outside South Africa, it preserves a remarkable pluralism

and survives the frequent polemical exchanges. Moreover, being based in South Africa, it has continued to pay attention to labour. Both CCS and Debate are inspired by the global justice movement, into which it actively feeds.

The other major cyberspace to which I became attached in the 2000s was that of Choike<sup>5</sup> in Uruguay. Choike has the disadvantage of a name in Mapuche (it means ‘Southern Cross’ in this southern Latin American indigenous language) and the advantage of always turning up top of page on Google (which, revealing its ignorance of Mapuche, may prompt surfers to opt for ‘Choice’). Choike subtitles itself ‘a portal on Southern civil societies’, but is actually a Southern-based and orientated site for global civil society. It is bilingual (English/Spanish), professionally designed and edited. My affinity with Choike, or its affinity with me, was due, I guess, to our mutual Latin American and feminist connections (see below). Again unusually for a ‘civil society’ or even a ‘new social movement’ cyberspace, it was sensitive to international labour issues. It was also, of course, interested in the WSF and the global justice movement. When I was working with Jai Sen and others on a printed reader about the WSF (Sen et. al. 2004), I persuaded Jai that we should put what I called our Big Orange Book, or BOB, online. Elsa Duhagon at Choike was more than agreeable. So it was posted very early on Choike.<sup>6</sup> In a gesture toward some notional copyright requirements – and in the hope of some even more notional book sales – we put online an edited-down version of the book. In 2008, Choike added blog pages and accorded me one. Choike never refused a submission of mine, so this became a minor cyber-depository of my writings at least during the first decade of the twentyfirst century.<sup>7</sup>

I became increasingly convinced that we (in the global justice movement) should be moving from the printing press to cyberspace. The cost of posting one copy of BOB within Europe – never mind trans-continentially – entirely wiped out any advantages of low-cost print publishing in India. So my next experiment with Choike was for the first edition of an English-language compilation, on ‘Recovering Internationalism’.<sup>8</sup> This was a collection of my own essays done since around my retirement (1998) or the beginning of the World Social Forum (2001). Elsa had to edit and layout from my typescript. I was encouraged to escape to Cyberia by a rejection slip from the critical-globalisation series of a noted British print-publisher. They had said that too much of the material was already available to putative readers online. I thought, ‘Well, expletive you then! I’ll put the whole expletive book online and cut out the middleperson’.

The first attempt at producing camera-ready copy was a little more demanding than working with a print-publisher, since Elsa could not claim mother-language English. But my experience with most traditional print-publishers has been that they want the feudal Right of the First Night ... forever! One is involved in all kinds of copyright shit, has to sign legally-binding/blinding documents, wait a year or more for one’s book to appear, and then another year or more before anyone is actually aware of it or reviews it. And then, adding insult to abuse, it comes out in a territorially-restricted market, and priced at anything between 50 and 100 Euros. Lucky authors then receive maybe €100 a year for a few years. Unlucky ones (me) receive a note saying they have not yet paid off the cost of a publisher-supplied index. And a note saying that what I have earned is so little that payment will be postponed until it has maybe reached the princely sum of €20.55.

Whilst preparing the manuscript for Choike, I was exploring the possibilities of online publication in more sophisticated form. I discovered a site called (now) Universal Publishers,<sup>9</sup> and that an academic colleague in Amsterdam had published with them both a 350-page printed book and an electronic e-book. The first was priced, 2008, at a reasonable US\$30, the second at US\$9. Whilst in the early 2000s he could have been accused of publishing with a vanity press, by 2008 he had been

joined by dozens of others. Publishing was clearly being transformed from an industry to a service. And, simultaneously, it was cutting the cost of the output and promising the author a faster and much higher royalty. And rapid recovery of copyright.

Later, I discovered a more sophisticated operation, the then prize-winning Lulu Publishers.<sup>10</sup> One attractive feature of this outfit was, for me, that you could set up your book on Lulu to see what it looked like, whilst keeping it private. Or you could order just a single copy and do your proof-reading on this (my experiment took fourteen days to be returned to me and cost me some €20).<sup>11</sup>

The point here is that commercial publishing is moving into the Castells' world of 'real virtuality'. And that this new capitalist world is one of profound contradictions that can be exploited/emancipated by the global justice movement. It is clear that self-publication online requires of the author new skills, and, possibly, a certain amount of *chutzpah* (Yiddish: brass nerve).<sup>12</sup> But such skills are clearly obtainable by millions of those who have already got those required by computerised communication, by computer games and by even the mobile phone. At the other end of the publishing operation are, of course, the putative consumers. These are no longer going to be guided by names like Cambridge University Press or Random House, or even Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik). They are going to have to make critical choices. But, given the tsunami of written, audio and visual information with which we are increasingly confronted, they will also have increasingly to themselves select what they choose to read and value, rather than having this decided for them by media monopolies – or the CPSU(B).

Having abandoned alternative international labour communication to look after itself, I was invited/tempted into engagement with alternative international media more generally. This was with respect to the World Social Forum (of which much more in Chapter 9 below). It was at one of its International Council (IC) meetings, 2005, which happened to take place in the Netherlands. I had been asked by the Network Institute for Global Democracy (NIGD),<sup>13</sup> one of the networks with which I was involved, to take part in this meeting and in its communication commission (CC). My first formal appearance within the IC (I had previously dropped in on one informally, Florence, 2002) was marked by a certain amount of ribaldry when I couldn't remember the precise name of the network I was 'representing'. The laughter was sympathetic insofar as the IC was not particularly concerned with credentials, and that many of them anyway knew me as Gina's partner, Gina being a longstanding member of the IC. As usual, I experienced the combination of disorientation/stimulation that accompanies my participation in WSF events. On top of this, I was still recovering from a brush with Cancer's Grim Reaper, and from the chemotherapy that had – at least until time of writing – driven him back from my door. Again, as customary with my participation in the WSF, I felt obliged to write all this up in excessive detail. I began:

Whilst the WSF may be run and attended by networks, and networks of networks, it has seemed to me to function more like a coalition of collaborating NGOs, these often acting more as organisations/institutions which maybe require some cultural or communicational service or expression. Mark Poster...asks whether cyberspace is a Hammer or Germany. My feeling is that it is a Hammer (tool), an existing Culture (Germany), but also Utopia (a non-existing but desirable place/space, that we ourselves must invent).<sup>14</sup>

I continued with a reference back to a Forum predecessor with which my putative readers were certainly not familiar:

My point of comparison with the WSFs here, paradoxical though it may seem, would be the international Communist movement in its emancipatory moment, up to the 1930s. Exemplifying this period would be the songs of Bertold Brecht and Hanns Eisler, two giants of world high culture, who produced musically innovatory but popular words and music for the movement, that could be and were spread worldwide ... Much of the music is in march time, clearly intended to accompany demonstrations and revolutions. It also presents a Manichean worldview. This was in terms of capitalist/worker, capitalism/socialism, capitalism-fascism-war/*eine sozialistische weltrepublik* (a socialist world republic). This worldview might be literally out of tune with the aspirations and practices of a contemporary international and internationalist movement that has 'one no and many yesses'. Yet it raises the question of why neither the GJ&SM nor the WSF have yet found their Brechts and Eislers. (Ibid.)

I am not all sure that the WSF has yet re-invented itself in the light of either Mark Poster or Brecht/Eisler. Let me rephrase this: it hasn't. There is, on behalf of the IC an active and qualified communication commission.<sup>15</sup> And I think that there is a rather more systematic approach developing toward both 'internal' (for the WSF) and 'external' (from the WSF) communications activities, including, obviously, online ones. However, communication *about* the WSF is far more than what the IC initiates or approves. Since I wrote that piece there has developed a whole series of sites and services. A possibly quite incomplete directory of these could be found, spring 2008, on the website of the European Social Forum, Malmö, October 2008.<sup>16</sup> An increasingly substantial list is that maintained by my longtime friend and collaborator, Jai Sen.<sup>17</sup>

## **2008: Back in the Ex-USSR ... Again!?**

I had been trying for some years to re-establish contact with my 1957 Moscow friend, Renita Grigorieva (see Chapter 2). The search had been obstructed by Renita's virtual absence from virtual reality, as well as my limited memory of the Cyrillic script on the one website that mentioned her. Then, in 2007, she contacted me through a much younger friend of hers, Aleksandra (Sasha) Osminina. Sasha, educated in Leningrad (as it then was) as an organist, was working in some New Russian commercial enterprise. She was, evidently, computer competent and had more than adequate English. Sasha explained that Renita wanted me to come to Moscow for the fiftieth anniversary of the World Youth and Student Festival of 1957. She and her friends, in a body called Citizen Diplomacy, had set up a little exhibition about the festival in Moscow.

There was no way I could get to Moscow at that time. It was difficult enough to arrange even one year later, with me paying my airfares and Renita and friends hosting me in Russia. There was the hassle at the Russian Consulate - just round three corners from my place in The Hague - over a visa, requirements of evidence that my health insurance applied to Russia (not assured by the standard concept of 'world coverage'), and legal arrangements with some travel agency in Russia that would enable me to be a tourist and yet *not* have to stay in hotels. I had been to Moscow in post-Soviet times, but that was just after the Fall of Communism (or should one say the Rise of Capitalism?) when hopes for a liberal democracy and radically-democratic labour and social movements could still be entertained (Waterman 1994). That trip had been for an international labour communications event and it had not even occurred to me to look for Renita, though I made fruitless attempts to track down

my old IUS colleague, Igor Biriukov.

Despite my various previous experiences, I suffered depressing culture shock on arriving in *nouveau riche* capitalist Moscow, with its *biznismany* doing 80kph in their Mercs down city streets, with its Rolls Royce showroom, with its Third World poverty and beggars. I stayed several nights at the Grigoriev's place, an enormous apartment, for which they had traded in three others of an extended family. This was in a gated community, within walking distance of the Kremlin, previously reserved for the top Soviet elite, whose plaques still decorated the outside wall. I assume the previous inhabitants had not *walked* to the Kremlin. The elite apartment was anything but luxurious, if one disregards the original Chagall in the dining room. This was the residence of a much-extended family, with two resident *babushki*, preparing solid nineteenth century Russian food for family, resident friends and a daily-changing crew of visitors such as myself. The kitchen ceiling was collapsing, there was no hot water running in the bathroom. Missing the Chagall would have been easy, surrounded as it was by a dozen or more religious icons – these overflowing into the library/office/bedroom I had been assigned.

I had not, however, been invited to Moscow as an anthropologist of urban middle-class capitalist life after the violent Western-imposed deconstruction of a life-pervading and authoritarian Communism. I had actually been invited to take part in a conference of this International Committee for Citizen Diplomacy (henceforth ICCD or CitDip). This was to take place 400 km South-East of Moscow, in the small town of Yelets, still somewhat deprived of McDonald's capitalism. Renita had connections with Yelets insofar as her mother lived (and was iconised in the museum) there; that Renita was converted to the church by a local priest; that she had lived and worked with the terminally ill there; and that she seemed to be something of a matron saint to the town. Yelets, where the main industry seemed to be restoration of its beautiful churches and monasteries, hardly has the tourist potential of the 'Golden Ring' of such towns nearer Moscow. So CitDip had been engaged in trying to turn it into some kind of International City of Peace.

Although this idea seemed to belong to the era of 'peaceful coexistence', I thought it was not a bad one, but was unable to judge whether Renita, Nikolai and their friends had the power or the contacts to further this project.

One problem seemed to me that the ICCD was truly 'a society of good friends' (to cite again Comintern representative Manuilsky's disparaging remark on the British Communist Party of the 1920s). It does not even seem to see itself as an NGO. Despite the keyword in its title, its international contacts also seem to be other such good friends, several of them dating back to the International Union of Students of the 1950s! Indeed, three of the names on its headed notepaper, Pelikán, Yankov and Tanaka, are in a photo I took at the IUS in the mid-1950s. Most of these foreign friends seem to have lived in Russia and/or to speak the language. Since I was inducted into CitDip, I was one of the IUS ones, though not a Russian speaker. And I am possibly the only one of these foreign friends who was engaged with the global justice movement and the World Social Forum.

Moreover, CitDip has no website or e-list, scarcely any print publications. And it operates basically in Russia (plus its 'near-abroad') and in Russian. Discovering all this, I began to think more kindly of the internationally-orientated but foreign-funded NGOs I normally castigate or dismiss. And why I considered CitDip as a society of good friends is that its members seemed jointly identified not only with Renita but 1) with Yelets, 2) the Russian Orthodox Church, 3) Nikolai Roerich, a Russian Cosmicist, painter, traveller and international cultural-rights defender, 4) Indian spiritualism, 5) the Altai (seriously far from Moscow, mountainous, rural, shamanistic).

I wondered whether my other 1957 friend, Nikolai Diko, who seemed thoroughly secular, shared this eclectic set of interests and identities. He came over to me as much more of a post- than a pre-Soviet person, being not only more computer-friendly than Renita but also active in the collective defence of his Moscow apartment bloc against marauding speculators. We also found a common language – Bad Spanish – since he had had the almost unique opportunity of studying in Chile in the 1960s. It was Nikolai who issued and officially stamped my membership of the Board, Central Committee or International Committee of CitDip, over my evidently too-feeble complaints that I would prefer to ‘liaise’ or ‘network’ with it.

Interviewed by journalists, with high-modern video equipment, about my impressions, one day after arrival in Yelets, I said I was not sure whether I had arrived on or come from Mars. I should, of course, have said ‘both’. I was finally rescued from my Western bewilderment, at what had followed seventy years of Russian Orthodox Communism, by the late arrival at the CD conference of Lyudmila Bulavka from *Alternativy*, herself a member of the CD board. As the name itself might suggest, *Alternativy*, is something rather more orientated to the global justice and solidarity movement than is CitDip. To start with, it considers itself a movement rather than an NGO. And then its website comes up in English as well as Russian.<sup>18</sup> What’s more, I had several times met its best-known activist, Alexander Buzgalin (Lyudmila’s husband), at various ‘alternative’ international events (starting with my Moscow visit in 1993). Later I discovered that Lyudmila was a labour researcher and a social theorist. Her book on labour protest is entitled, provocatively, *Non-Conformism* (Bulavka 2004). But it is on the website of *Alternativy* that I found her social theorising – and one key to my sense of being a stranger in a strange land. The piece was in English and entitled ‘From the Cultural Revolution of 1917 to the Counter-Revolution of the Present’:

The country of my birth – the USSR – is no longer in existence today, and for anyone to look back at its history and to highlight, not just the obvious tragedies incurred by the Soviet peoples, but also its achievements and successes – and more than that, to demonstrate pride in those achievements – is tantamount for many to be little more than a sign of disease. But what motivates my desire to go back to the past, and what fortifies my courage, is a recognition that what we are living through now is a fundamental crisis of culture of global proportions, which has not just affected Russia in the most squalid of ways, but which has also destroyed a culture which always united the most contradictory periods of Soviet history. It is my belief that the destruction of these former cultural values has evoked a tragic sensation in the vast majority of ordinary people, whereby they feel nothing more than immigrants in their own country. To add to their belief that they have no real future ahead of them, devoid as they are of economic resources, they are also told that they have no past. What is otherwise a very abstract belief in the so-called ‘End of History’ is for us extremely tangible and real. (Bulavka 2006)

I was in Russia for about two weeks, with limited time and facilities for going beyond superficial impressions. So I had to make use of what was available in English, in print or what was online in one or other internet café – one with espresso, one without even mineral water. A saddening read was the book of the assassinated democratic journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, who says at one point:

Our society isn’t a society any more. It is a collection of windowless isolated cells .... There are thousands who together might add up to be the Russian people, but the walls of

our cells are impermeable. If somebody is suffering, he is upset that nobody else seems concerned. If, in other cells at the same time, anybody is in fact thinking about him, it leads to no action and they only really remember he had a problem when their own situation becomes completely intolerable. (Politkovskaya 2007: 254)

One can also look at the work of Boris Kagarlitsky, whom I first met at that 1993 event when he was a leader of a short-lived Workers' Party and a union advisor. Boris runs another NGO, the Institute of Globalisation and Social Movements.<sup>19</sup> And is a Fellow of the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute, so we meet occasionally, either there or at World Social Forums. He also writes excellent English, one report beginning:

Recently Russian mass media have focused on labour movement. For the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union the Russian journalists are writing about strikes and workers' protests on May 1, 2008. Strike movement has been on the rise in Russia during the last ten months. It was started by the workers of the transnational companies and was assumed by the employees of the Russian corporations. The labour disputes are becoming more intense and enduring. Official trade unions are helpless – they've failed to organise the workers who totally ignore those organisations, but neither can they serve the interests of the corporations by preventing or helping to regulate the disputes. When the grassroots worker groups of the official trade unions take initiative proposing to increase the wages or improve the labour conditions, they find themselves in a conflict with the superior agencies and have to turn for support to alternative labour organisations. (Kagarlitsky 2008)

That workers in transnationals have been in the forefront, that the traditional unions are ineffective, that alternative labour groups are active – all these factors are familiar from hard-pressed labour movements elsewhere. They give rise to acts or possibilities for global labour solidarity. But it would be difficult to argue that Things are Better – that a twentyfirst century model for the emancipation of labour, exists elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> The barbarian Western de-structuring of Russia's traditional forms of employment, the fracturing of the traditional working class, the failure of traditional strategies, the disorientation of the left, all this may have its particular forms in Russia but it would not be totally foreign to workers in South Africa, in Brazil ... or in Italy? Nor, for that matter, would be the waves of popular protest that are growing against the commoditisation of housing, social security and other neo-liberal provocations and outrages.

I left Mars-East and returned to Mars-West in sober mood. Russian workers, Orthodox Christians and civil society may be perceived by myself and others as part of a globalised world. But for *them* to clearly feel so – and for the West-Martian or South-Martian global justice movement to seriously relate to them as such – will take a long time, much imagination, and Herculean efforts.

## **Emancipating labour internationalism in print and online**

'Emancipating labour internationalism' was actually the title of a long chapter (Waterman 2004b) I contributed to a project set up by a new friend and *compañero*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, a Portuguese social theorist attached to the universities of Coimbra and Wisconsin. I am using the subtitle to distinguish my labour activities outside the WSF from those within. Those *outside* were

organised by unions, labour history and other labour history bodies. In some cases these appeared untouched by the newest wave of global social movements. In most they were so affected. But they evidently had their own interests and orientations, and were umbilically attached to the trade union movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

During this decade I evidently have been happier with *writing* about the new labour and other internationalisms than with participation in events that might either claim to be doing likewise or that I had thought might be open to such. This preference for theory, analysis and proposition, rather than even such open spaces as the World Social Forum, is due to the outstanding and often highly original writings of an increasing number of others. It is my impression that one can find innovatory intellectual work on international labour<sup>21</sup> and international social movements<sup>22</sup> that is rather more radical and far-reaching than the growing number of protest activities or the political events devoted to such. Many of such writers and writings are due, of course, to participation in and reflection on the Forums or the wider GJ&SM. But it seems to me that the writings, in the tradition of engaged but critical social theory, point in directions that the Forums and movements have not yet reached or seen.<sup>23</sup>

This is not to disparage either the Forums or the movements, many of which have been either provoked or inspired by the new forms of labour and other social-movement expression, locally, nationally, regionally, globally. Maybe this is simply a matter of personal preference or impatience, maybe it is how such intellectual work *should* be. But between the ‘new international labour studies’ of the 1970s-80s and the ‘new global social movement studies’ of the 1990s-2000s, this was not the case. We have to put this down to the twin impacts of Neo-Liberal triumph(alism) and left defeat(ism). With more than a little help from academic postmodernism (of right or left, a ‘discourse determinism’ under which no emancipatory project is imaginable except as an object of yet another round of intellectual deconstruction).<sup>24</sup>

I followed the rise of the newest international labour studies in a series of review articles. I also returned to the topic of ‘social movement unionism’ more than once, though now trying to distinguish my usage from those I disagreed with by calling my version ‘the new global social unionism’. Exchanges following from this continued fruitfully. I co-edited a couple of collections on international labour/labour internationalism. A particularly pleasant and productive collaboration was with social (movement) geographer, Jane Wills (Waterman and Wills 2002). When I worried at her about the relative lack of ‘space’ or ‘place’ in our compilation, she replied airily, ‘Oh, fuck the social geography, let’s just do the internationalism’. I appreciated the cavalier attitude toward her own discipline – particularly when it proved to be no obstacle to her later getting a professorship. I have already mentioned the collaboration with Jai Sen, which continued into the 2010s. But, in the later 2000s I started to consider publishing compilations of my own papers. This began with a collection in a Spanish-language series published by my *companion@s* of Democracia Global, Lima. This is a very nice series, demonstrating the transformation of Peruvian publishing since I first became acquainted with it in the later 1980s. The series is called *Colección Transformación Global* and includes work by Latin American and European writers associated with the newest social movements, such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Teivo Teivainen, Ana Esther Ceceña, Raul Zibechi, and my partner Gina Vargas.<sup>25</sup> I was a more than anxious father at the birth of my book, watching the half-dozen students nurse it through (re)translation, cover design and printing. At its formal launch in Lima we had one single copy to show off. Publishing in Spanish and in Peru gave me the opportunity to pay homage to Jose Carlo Mariátegui, one of the original and independent Marxist thinkers (the Peruvian Gramsci,

remember?).

In 2010 I found myself once more engaged with labour and cyberspace. This was because of the decision of the new, open, online journal, *Interface: A Journal of and for Social Movements*, to do a special section on 'Voices of Dissent: Activists' Engagements in the Creation of Alternative, Autonomous, Radical and Independent Media'.<sup>26</sup> I was an enthusiastic member of the editorial team (regardless of this being called something like a 'spokesgroup'). I offered a paper on labour and sent out a survey to thirty or so of my favourite international online labour communicators. I got two replies.

Chastened but not quite paralysed, I based my paper (Waterman 2010a) on this meagre base but found that I had to both retrace the relevant history and identify the rapidly growing and increasingly varied contemporary field. Despite the interesting developments, I still found this to be an area deprived of much critical (self-)reflection. My conclusions amounted to something of a research programme or charter for action. They pointed labour in the general direction of the WSF and the broader global justice and solidarity movement – if not of its cyberspace practices more specifically. Fortunately, others were addressing the latter. Referring to the effort at creating an open online web space for a 2008 edition of the European Social Forum, Mayo Fuster Morrell mentioned those actors with a more-or-less passive attitude towards this. Regarding the WSF-friendly trade unions more specifically she says of this disinterest that it was expressed

by the representatives of trade unions which allowed the project to proceed, as they had no interest in the technology as long as their role as representatives of organisations was not affected. They had little sense of the potential of new technologies. ESF webteam members thus had to raise awareness among other [European Preparatory Assembly of the European Social Forum] organisers of the capabilities offered by [Information and Communication Technology] and its political nature.

This attitude is problematic for the use of the open platforms at Social Forums, because this sector is one of those that has more influence on funding resources of the ESF and it tends to underestimate or be reluctant to cover the costs of maintaining the tools.

This sector raised concerns about possible interferences that the tool could cause in their role as representatives of organisations. The resistance to access of any person to the tool had to do with the possibility that this would interfere with the internal hierarchies of their organisations.<sup>27</sup>

My feeling here, actually, is that whilst scepticism of the intellect is in place, we should not abandon optimism of the will. There seem to me two possible sources of a labour (if not union) development in the direction of a broad and open engagement with cyberspace.

The *first* is the existence of two or three major international labour movement initiatives that, whilst paying general obeisance to the traditional institutions and discourses, are formally independent of such. These are *LabourStart*, *RadioLabour* and the *New Unionism Network*.<sup>28</sup> On the one hand, their formal independence reveals the inability of the international union structures to open up. On the other hand, well, it seems that this is how online networking develops at the periphery of formally democratic, actually hierarchical, structures. On the third hand (cyborgs have such), the limits of their independence are revealed by their unwillingness or inability, in different ways, to fly free of the institutions – far less to criticise or, so far, allow criticism of such. I could consider fourth

and fifth hands. But let me mention one specific application of promise. This is the *UnionBook* site fathered by *LabourStart*.<sup>29</sup> Intended to be labour's answer to *FaceBook*, it would seem to be an open-access, unmonitored or unfiltered space, in which inter/national labour activists, unions and networks have free play. Time will tell whether *LabourStart* owner, Eric Lee, manages to square the circle between the international union's predilection for place-bound control and a twentyfirst century labour movement's necessity for the dialogue and dialectic implied by cyberspace.

The *second* source of the labour movement's entry into Cyberia would seem to me to be provided by the dozens of networks identified in an appendix to a later paper (Waterman 2011c). If these were found by myself after a brief search, then there are likely to be an equal number that were not. The 'labour', 'open', 'innovatory' or 'dialogical' nature of these emanations are, of course, a matter for the kind of research I proposed in my paper.

One of them was my own, launched in 2010, together with Canadian union officer and labour intellectual, Brian Green. After some months of operation, with myself providing most of the material and Brian at the sharp end, I was wondering whether this little and comparatively crude operation should continue an independent existence, promote itself more widely, or simply convert itself into a group within the apparently open, technically sophisticated and certainly well-subscribed *UnionBook*. The answer is: it didn't. This was possibly a repetition of the Sherlock Holmes/Dr Watson relationship, with each of us hoping the other would be Sherlock. The development of labour's cyberia did not, of course, stop here. In 2013 it was still developing, though we (or the part of we that is me) are still waiting for an international labour site or portal which is going to provide some kind of global coordination, allow some kind of global dialogue on theories, technologies, strategies, experiences. In the meantime I am inclined to recommend labour cyber-adventurers and even cyber-tourists to visit the site(s) of the Netherlands-based Turkish labour and social movement activist, Orsan Senalp.<sup>30</sup>

## **Encountering feminism and feminists**

Actually, as I might have already suggested, I had encountered feminism during my midlife crisis, when I had found myself being, well, emasculated. This is not generally considered a positive experience, particularly for men. Insofar, however, as it opened up to me the world of women and the ideas of feminists, it turned out to be both sobering and empowering. My relationship with Gina Vargas<sup>31</sup> had begun in 1990 when she had a visiting position at the Institute of Social Studies. My more or less annual visits to Peru began in 1995 as her relationship with the Institute was fading (actually, theirs with her). And insofar as I was either staying at Gina's place or accompanying her elsewhere in Latin America, this implied meeting a lot of her woman-friends, and then of observation at, or at least awareness of, various regional or global feminist events.

The first and most dramatic of these was before I had actually retired, during the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women (WCW), Beijing, 1995. After the Latin American women's movements, networks and NGOs had got rid of a conservative Catholic nominee, they had nominated Gina as NGO Coordinator for the Latin American and Caribbean Regional presence in Beijing. And this implied that her NGO, Flora, would provide the coordination office. And Gina's small apartment (already accommodating her daughter, Alejandra, and me) being repeatedly invaded by Latin America's exuberant feminists – and not only one or two at a time.

I had intended to use my presence in Lima as an opportunity for research on international feminist

networking. My project proposal had been turned down by the feminist Research Coordinator at the ISS.<sup>32</sup> I nonetheless collected a file-drawer of material, mostly whilst in Lima. In all my time since, whether in Peru or elsewhere in Latin America, I recall only two feminists who were hostile to me. All the others, hetero, lesbian, bi- or whatever, treated me with respect, as Gina's partner, sometimes with considerable affection. The same with the mostly-young women working either permanently for Flora or temporarily for the Beijing Coordination.

It was because of the Coordination that my internet 'Eureka!' moment occurred in Lima. Either Gina or someone else at the office told me that the Dominican feminist, Magaly Pineda, had got someone to design and set up something called a 'website' for it. No one at Flora, however, knew how one could actually find this on one of the office computers. So I went to the 'alternative' Peruvian server – one orientated toward the social movements and NGOs, in upscale Miraflores, for my epiphany. Having discovered the Coordination's site, I was more than somewhat disappointed to see what was on it. Or, rather, wasn't. It took some years more for the Latin American women's movements to get more effectively computer networked. At time of writing there are dozens of attractive Latin American and international feminist networks online, and various excellent articles and books about women and the internet and/or feminist analyses of the internet.<sup>33</sup>

At one moment during my stay, Gina discussed with me the possibility of our jointly doing a compilation on women and internationalism. Unfortunately, I took this as a proposal rather than a ponder. Gina drew back when confronted with my draft for such. And – possibly chastened by our misunderstanding – I don't recall our having collaborated on any publication since. We have occasionally appeared together on platforms, often attended each other's presentations, appeared in the same compilations, but we have never (yet?) co-authored. This was not the only difficult moment in a relation stretching over the Atlantic, the Amazon and the Andes, and which has nonetheless survived two decades and more.

Gina, famously extrovert and expressive, is nonetheless shy about promoting herself, or even saying 'I' in her extensive writings. She is, thus, also resistant to the idea of writing her own autobio, though not averse to being interviewed on her life, times and writings. In a secondhand bookshop in Brixton, London, I came across this immensely heavy four-volume encyclopedia of prominent women throughout history and across the world. I instinctively searched for her name, found the paragraph, and then bought the whole set (for £10) and trundled them back home with me to The Hague. I showed it to Gina, who could not imagine who had written it but was duly impressed, though not to the point of carrying even the one volume back with her to Peru. The last volume of the set was eventually brought by me to Lima, 2012. What the encyclopedia said about Gina was:

**VARGAS, Virginia (1945-). Peruvian feminist activist.** Born July 23, 1945, in Lima, Peru; m. Juan Veas Rossi, 1968 (died 1979); m. Valente; children: 1 daughter. Moved to Chile to be with 1st husband (1968) and worked as sociology professor while organizing for Salvador Allende's Socialist Popular Unity Party; forced to leave Chile after 1973 coup in which Allende was deposed by military dictator Pinochet; worked in Peru for National Cultural Institute and continued solidarity work with Chile; pursued graduate studies in economics; helped found Flora Tristan Center for Peruvian Women (1979); served as the centre's coordinator and then as director until 1990, offering programs on domestic violence, reproductive rights, abortion, sexual freedom, local government empowerment and citizenship; published magazine *Viva* (Live) for 10 years through the centre's research institute; participated in women's economic development projects of non-governmental

organisations, helping found Latin American section of Development Alternatives for a New Era (DAWN); as international feminist leader, helped to organise Encuentros (meetings) of Latin American and Caribbean Women in Peru to strengthen development of local feminism; 1981 and 1983; served as visiting professor at many universities and for Women's Programme at Social Studies Institute at The Hague; was Latin American representative to 4th Women's World Conference in Beijing (1995); continued to work for advancement of women and sustainable development, collaborating with Women's Council of the Interamerican Bank of Development, Council on Gender of the World Bank and Women's World Forum. Received Monseñor Proaño Award from the Latin American Association for Human Rights (1995), UNIFEM award (1995), and Spain's Progressive Woman Award (1995). (Commire 2002: 1921).

By each of these sentences there hangs a tale. And various corrections or qualifications. And, of course, there is the whole story of Gina's activities since then, which I fear will not be told by her. But the piece does give an impression of the woman I got involved with.

Back now, however, to 1996. In this year there took place in Chile a Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter (henceforth: *Encuentro*). Previously, these events had been rather pluralistic and tolerant. In many ways they could be considered forerunners of the World Social Forums of the 2000s. This particular *encuentro* turned into a confrontation, engineered by those considering themselves 'autonomous feminists' against those they considered 'patriarchal feminists'. Gina, because of her Beijing role, was subjected to venomous personal attack.<sup>34</sup> The nature of this Maoist-style operation was brilliantly summarised by Carina Gobbi (cited Waterman 1998a:176):

What one can say about this encounter is that the Latin American and Caribbean feminist movement forms part of the social and political map of the region; because of this it cannot avoid bleeding from the wound that affects the left and all the social and political movements of the continent: the traditional forms of doing politics, self-centred, non-dialogical, punitive, messianic, incapable of confronting strategies, of dissolving spaces of power, without fracturing, perplexed before this enemy without a face that is neoliberalism and its postmodernity.

The Machiavellian politicking, and the Manichean logic deployed at this *encuentro* reminded me of the vanguardist macho left in Europe.<sup>35</sup> I tried to reassure Gina about this but, at the same time, I wanted to use the case for a chapter on feminism and internationalism in my book (Waterman 1998a:Ch. 6). We batted this back and forth, with me arguing that I had only used evidence that was publicly available, she clearly not wanting me to write about the affair. Eventually, she said, 'Publish what you want!'. And I, if with considerable trepidation, did so. A decade and more later, I think it stands up quite well. And I hope Gina is reconciled to it, but am not sure whether this is the case.

I had been complaining about Gina's concentration on patriarchy, almost to the total exclusion of other contradictions – well at least that of class. She then leap-frogged over me into the WSF process, as described above. Insofar as the Latin American left had been as Gobbi characterises it above, and insofar as the WSF represented a radical surpassing of this, it is clear why she felt at home here, even if not why I had such difficulties with the WSF. This cannot be put down to the division of labour that I have identified – with me representing 'scepticism of the intellect' and she 'optimism of the will'. It may have something to do with my being a '*conflictivo*' and she a '*conciliadora*' (in Gina's mouth the

first of these takes the masculine form and the second the feminine). Gina is a great committee-woman, clearly non-confrontational, and also a hard worker. Let me not here admit to being the binary opposite. Let me rather say that I am more self-indulgent in style and rate of work, and that I have been known to express myself polemically. And that I am totally in love with the Web, which allows for relationships of almost limitless breadth, depth, longevity, brevity, and for changes of mode from debate, through discussion to dialogue, even within the one exchange.

What do we further have in common (leaving out of consideration here our joint enthusiasm for good food, cooking – hers and his – drink and sex)? Well, we both like to laugh. When, for once, Gina was making fun of me, rather than me of her, I said, ‘Gina, I don’t like this role-switching. Remember, I am the comedian, you are the clown. I make fun of you and you make fun of yourself’. Our good friend Nira Yuval-Davis came in with her sharp eye and blunt tongue: ‘Hey, Gina makes jokes too, Peter’. True, but I have never known anyone to whom so many embarrassing things *happen*. Nor anyone so open in making fun of herself. I, like a doctor, tend to bury my blunders. Gina is also fast in thought and act, whereas I am slow in both. I once said to Gina that men are supposed to fall for women like their mothers (as the Jewish joke goes: ‘Oedipus, Shmedipus, as long as he loves his mother!’). I fall for women who are like my father, extrovert, optimistic and funny. Oh, and Gina was also an impressively calm and effective carer when I was hospitalised in Rio and Lima, at the turn of 2008-09. I was pleasantly surprised by this because she has been known to panic when confronted with an invisible or intangible threat (as in the London tube once, when I explained to her, in perhaps a too-laconically English manner, that there had been a bomb scare and we had to walk calmly to the exit). She explained that she had no problem with more visible or tangible threats, such as police on horses – then not an unknown experience for feminist activists in Lima.

So far I have been talking of a relationship between a couple of cosmopolitans. ‘Cosmopolitanism’ is actually a word that comes out of the French enlightenment, and this Greek borrowing by the Enlightened, gave it Classical respectability. What it meant in the mouth of the rising French bourgeois modernists and rationalists is that we would have universal peace and justice if everyone spoke French. More on this in my final chapter.

I speak French. It was my first foreign language. Gina does not speak French. When I do speak it with a mutual friend, Gina looks at us as if we were speaking Mandarin. Nor does Gina speak Dutch, which I read and speak with some fluency (if with restricted vocabulary and grammar). Gina speaks English, which she learnt as a child when she accompanied her father to a US military college which quite failed to make him pro-Gringo. I stumble even in my limited Spanish, which Gina thinks I fail to learn out of disrespect for Peru, for Latin America, if not for herself. Actually, the problem seems to be that language-learning capacity decreases with age. Or mine does. So we mostly make do in English, which Gina would not claim to speak perfectly. This can lead to difficulties, as when she turned up from Peru for a conference in Brixton rather than Brighton, both pronounced, in Genglish, ‘Brikhton’. (Our mutual friend, Anissa Helie, and I actually correspond in Genglish).

I am not sure exactly how much Gina and I understand of what the other is saying. But we both read, of course, what the other is *writing*. And, of equal course, we influence the thinking and writing of each other. To what extent I leave some third party to judge. Possibly enough for us to decide, after some twentytwo years, late-2012, to formalise our relationship.

Paraphrasing here the last paragraph of Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, ‘Reader, I married her’.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.antenna.nl/~waterman/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel, from Uruguay, continued to do a PhD and become, firstly, a collaborator of the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute (TNI), then one of its most-prolific Senior Researchers. At TNI he joined another of my students of mine, Fiona Dove, from South Africa, who was already its Director. Later he became a visiting lecturer at the ISS. Other students of mine, or of the ISS, later had TNI connections, something that was certainly gratifying to me as the TNI became a significant player in the World Social Forum of the 2000s.

<sup>3</sup> <http://lists.fahamu.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/debate-list>, itself linked with the Centre for Civil Society (CCS), Durban, and its website. The CCS has a large ‘online library’ at <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp?3,28>, to which I have contributed over the years.

<sup>4</sup> <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp?10,24,8,55>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.choike.org/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.choike.org/nuevo\\_eng/informes/1557.html](http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html)

<sup>7</sup> <http://blog.choike.org/eng/?tag=peter-waterman>

<sup>8</sup> [‘Recovering Internationalism’](#)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.universal-publishers.com/book.php?method=ISBN&book=1581126956>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.lulu.com/gb/>

<sup>11</sup> Wikipedia on Lulu:

It is unclear whether or not Lulu should be regarded as a vanity press or if it represents a different publishing model. While some commentators have described Lulu as a variation on traditional vanity press publication, or perhaps simply as a more respectable version,<sup>[10]</sup> others have described it as sitting somewhere between a vanity press and a traditional publishing company. For example, David Rani notes that, unlike vanity press publishers, Lulu doesn’t charge authors an upfront fee, ... but also notes that they don’t offer editing or sales promotion – services that mass market publishers, such as Random House, offer their authors. Thus he determines that they come somewhere between the two. Linda Stilborne, however, states that Lulu is ‘not exactly’ a variation of a vanity press, reporting that authors will find Lulu ‘affordable’ and ‘books that are not worth reading still won’t sell’ ... while in *Click lit – ‘There are no more excuses for unpublished authors’*. *The Times* denies that Lulu is vanity press, stating that it is ‘a collision of the web, new printing technology and a universal yearning to vent and dazzle’ instead .... On the other side of the debate, many (including Larry Finlay, managing director of Transworld Publishing) point to the lack of ‘editorial arbitration’ and thus define Lulu as vanity press .... Lulu themselves go so far as to deny that they are a publisher at all, describing themselves as a ‘technology company’ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lulu %28company%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lulu_%28company%29).

<sup>12</sup> *Chutzpah* is a word somewhat richer than my translation. It is exemplified by the Jewish boy who, convicted of murdering his parents, appeals to the judge for leniency because he has been recently orphaned.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nigd.org/>. This is another space in which a number of my shorter pieces can be found.

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.choike.org/documentos/waterman\\_wsf\\_comunic.pdf](http://www.choike.org/documentos/waterman_wsf_comunic.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> See the following email lists: [wsfic-communication@listas.rits.org.br](mailto:wsfic-communication@listas.rits.org.br); [openesf@lists.openesf.net](mailto:openesf@lists.openesf.net).

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.fse-esf.org/spip.php?rubrique66>. Moreover, there was the ‘forum’s multilingual occasional newspaper’, *TerraViva* <http://www.ips.org/TV/wsf2010/>, produced by the Inter Press Service (IPS), of which the retired founder was a member of the IC’s CC. At even greater distance from the WSF is, of course, the IndyMediaCentre (IMC) <http://www.indymedia.org/en/index.shtml>. This was invented at the Battle of Seattle, was still going strong one decade later, and still giving some coverage to the WSF and related social forums. Another useful site for discussion on the WSF is Jai Sen’s Delhi-based operation, the Open Space Forum, <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php>. Finally, there has been a growing body of descriptive, analytical, theoretical and strategic literature around the WSF, networking, communication and culture, of which a brilliant example was provided, in the later-2000s by the TNI-based, Networked Politics project at <http://www.networked-politics.info/>. This concerned itself not so much with the WSF as with the global movement, paying attention to open source software and labour – and in a nice clean web format too. By the time readers click on any of these URLs, they may, of course, have been changed, died or been recycled in to other cyberspace emanations.

- 17 [http://www.openspaceforum.net/mailman/listinfo/worldsocialforum-discuss\\_openspaceforum.net](http://www.openspaceforum.net/mailman/listinfo/worldsocialforum-discuss_openspaceforum.net).
- 18 <http://www.alternativy.ru/en>.
- 19 For Boris, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris\\_Kagarlitsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Kagarlitsky), for his NGO, the Institute of Globalisation and Social Movements, <http://english.igso.ru/>.
- 20 For a pioneering nineteenth century Russian model for the emancipation of labour (and society as a whole), it is worth reading Plekhanov (1883/84). <http://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1883/xx/sdelg1.htm>.
- 21 I have tried to follow at least some of this writing on labour in various review articles (Waterman 1998b, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2011b).
- 22 An inevitably idiosyncratic selection. I have already mentioned Boaventura de Souza Santos (Portugal). Then there is the work, in no particular order, of Arturo Escobar (Colombia), Marianne Maeckelbergh (Belgium), Jeff Juris (USA), Giuseppe Caruso (Italy), Teivo Teivainen and his network (Finland), Sonia Alvarez (Cuba/USA), Eduardo Gudynas (Uruguay), Edgardo Lander (Venezuela), Ruth Reitan (USA), Virginia Vargas (Peru), Ezequiel Adamovsky (Argentina), Judith Blau and her network (USA), Jackie Smith (USA), Patrick Bond and his network (UK/South Africa), Jai Sen and his network (India/Canada), Christophe Aguiton (France), Walden Bello (Philippines), Susan George (USA/France), Amory Starr (USA), Catherine Eschle (UK), Janet Conway (Canada). Producing this list I note a bias toward the English- and Spanish-speaking worlds, a broad theoretical/ideological spread, the relatively high proportion of women, the under-representation of the African, Arab/Islamic world, of South and East Asia and the ex-Communist world. Some of the names mentioned will be found in the bibliography of this book. I leave readers to find details of the other writers online, as well as to extend the list globally ... and cyberspatially.
- 23 I wrote this before 2011 and the rise and rise of protests which overthrew regimes or, in other cases, reinvented the socialist notion of calling capitalism 'capitalism'. I really therefore ought to write a postscript that carries this book up to the moment of publication but have decided on leaving it at Chapter 10.
- 24 In US universities there were departments in which Post-Modernism/Post-Structuralism was imposed, on staff as well as students, with truly fundamentalist US fanaticism. The obstacle this implied for any progressive movement was elegantly ... umm ... deconstructed? ... by Barbara Epstein (1996). Its brilliant but impressively arrogant proponent in my own programme at the ISS eventually took intellectual refuge, possibly on grounds of discourse limitation or even discourse discrimination, in the US.
- 25 [http://www.democraciaglobal.org/index.php?fp\\_versec=true&fp\\_secid=15](http://www.democraciaglobal.org/index.php?fp_versec=true&fp_secid=15).
- 26 <http://interfacejournal.nuim.ie/?p=1339>.
- 27 Despite efforts, including requests to the author, I have been unable to find a source for this quote.
- 28 To be found respectively at [www.labourstart.org/](http://www.labourstart.org/), [www.radiolabour.net/](http://www.radiolabour.net/), and <http://www.newunionism.net/>.
- 29 A Beta version of UnionBook was launched mid-2010 at <http://unionbook2.ning.com/>. Regretably, it has not really developed into a space of dialogue.
- 30 I should say 'sites' because Orsan has created a series of such. However, one of the first of his web apparitions was in the somewhat pedestrian UnionBook, since Orsan combines utopian aspirations with practical orientations and a conciliatory personality. This space provides links to his multiple other ones, <http://www.unionbook.org/profile/OrsanSenalp>.
- 31 On reading a late draft of this book, Gina suggested that I should somewhere give her full name. This is Maria Yolanda Virginia Vargas Valente, aka Virginia Vargas Valente. I have no problem with either of these but Gina actually does, since various official documents have longer, shorter or different renditions of this. And whereas on Google I can be found under my two-word name (sometimes being confused with those of a music producer or boxer), one has to do two, three or more searches to find everything available from or on Gina.
- 32 It later occurred to me that since she had shown public objection to the presence of myself and another male researcher at a public seminar on women's movements organised at the ISS by Gina, she should either have disqualified herself from evaluating my project, or I should have appealed against her decision. I nonetheless carried out the research in Lima on the basis of my own funds. As in a previous case, however, I evidently lacked the self-confidence to complete the project as such. On the other hand, my

research trip did provide major inputs into other work I published on women, feminism and internationalism and/or international communication.

<sup>33</sup> An outstanding one for me is the Wendy Harcourt (1999) compilation with contributions, by amongst others, Arturo Escobar and Laura Agustín.

<sup>34</sup> One attack concerned her luxurious and presumably patriarchal car, presumably earned by or gifted for her services to either imperialism in general or Northern NGOs in particular. I would personally have traded in her actual tumble-down vehicle for the car of the leading autonomous feminist – sight unseen. Same with their respective appartments or houses.

<sup>35</sup> The recognition of often profound contradictions within feminism is something feminists increasingly recognise. A fascinating, if disturbing, example of such is a study of what she calls ‘hystories’ by Elaine Showalter (1997), in which she shows feminists on both sides of bitter and public conflicts over such issues as ‘recovered memory’ of childhood rape and incest.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.online-literature.com/brontec/janeeyre/38/>. In little else did this marriage follow the Jane Eyre model. It already involved some twenty to twentyfive people in The Hague. But in Lima, a month later, it involved sixty to seventy, in a ceremony organised by Gina’s daughter, Alejandra Veas, as well as one of Gina’s various networks, *Mujeres por la Democracia* (Women for Democracy).

## CHAPTER 9

# Between Place and Space: The World of Social Forums, 2002 to Whenever

## Learning Portaño!

I had often grumbled to Gina about her heavy involvement with, on the one hand, women-only events like the regular *encuentros feministas* in Latin America and the Caribbean, and, on the other, in the state or interstate national, regional and global events addressed to women. Yet, as already suggested, it was she who got involved with the World Social Forum right from the beginning, being a member of its International Council from 2001. She was thus one of a small number of feminists who recognised the potential of the WSF for re-articulating a feminist movement afflicted by *ongización* (NGOisation)<sup>1</sup> with the broader global justice movement. And, as was customary, she threw herself into this, body and soul. My involvement with the Forums was rather more marginal, in the sense that I mostly attended as an individual, self-funded, though always clearly advantaged by Gina's participation. Gina was here a fish in water since she had behind her decades of conference and network experience. Also, of course, the Brazilian base of the WSFs (Alvarez 2013) was both familiar and congenial to her. There is a *lingua franca* in Latin America, known as *Portaño!*. I suspect this means Brazilians understanding Spanish speakers rather than the other way round, given that Brazilian Portuguese has 953 vowel sounds, mostly unwritten. For instance, the beer 'Antarctica' is pronounced 'Antochtika' .... *I think*. Gina mis-stress-ed this communication form and, anyway, had feminist friends in Brazil. Also in Uruguay and Argentina. These more or less border on Porto Alegre (known after its airport initials as POA), which is itself really part of the more 'European' Southern Cone of Latin America.

## Porto Alegre 2002: Of Fish and Water

If Gina was a fish in water at the 2002 WSF in Porto Alegre, I was a fish out of it. I have repeatedly reported on the intense combination of disorientation and inspiration I experienced at the Forums. After a few days/daze at my first one, I decided that I could only write a personalised account and had to focus on labour and the WSF. This I continued to do until around 2010. And if I feel that I do not adequately cover even this aspect of WSF activities, it helps at least *me* to literally 'make sense' of what is otherwise always a humungous and chaotic event. In 2002 I also had my own personal workshop on the new internationalism:

The Charter of the Forum, the notion that every civil anti-global voice could speak, provided me with a two-hour workshop slot ... attended by 15-20 people, of whom about half were known to me and well-qualified to contribute. I had hoped that my proposal for a session on the separate meaning and inter-relationship of globalisation, internationalism, networking and solidarity ... might merge with those of others. This did not happen. The discussion was nonetheless lively and

constructive, and the event certainly created or reinforced a network of interested people from three or four continents. Next time, however, I will have to try to ensure that I am incorporated into something with a membership of more than one. (Waterman 2002a)

What the workshop did actually lead to was a fruitful collaboration with Jai Sen, whom I had first met at an Amsterdam event of Novib, the major Dutch development-funding agency. Our mutual dissatisfaction with what passed for international ‘partnership’ in the language of Novib may have laid the basis for our interest in the WSF. And it did not prevent us from appealing to and receiving a considerable subsidy from Novib for at least our first compilation on the WSF.

## **Florence 2002: Globalisation from the Middle**

In recollection, the first ESF, in Florence, November 2002, leaves romantic memories. Partly this was due to its *being* in Florence, a fairly romantic place, partly to its being in Italy, at that time a hub of considerable social movement, NGO and political party commitment.<sup>2</sup> It may, however, have had also something to do with joining Gina there, with my commitment to two workshops, and my hope to meet up with my old *World Student News* comrade from the 1950s, Carlo Meana (see Chapter 2). One of the workshops, set up by the London-based Italian, Massimo de Angelis, was very serious fun, being appropriately housed in a disused suburban factory, now converted into a Social Centre and squat. The other, set up by a UK groupuscule, with the possibly misleading name of Workers Liberty, reminded me of a Young Communist League meeting in the UK, in the 1950s, when, of course, I was a YCLer. The first workshop appreciated my take on ‘Labour and the Commons’ (Waterman 2003a), this having been requested by Massimo. My second presentation, on, I think, the same theme, was dismissed by one young philistine who considered historical or contemporary struggle over the commons as one that ignored the organisations and parties that had and were (so successfully?) representing the working class.

There was also here the *über*-vanguardist behaviour of the Socialist Workers Party, UK, which grabbed the front of the final, massive, impressive ESF demonstration, chanting ‘One Solution, Revolution!’ My feeling was that they didn’t know the difference between a solution and a problem. And certainly not between grossly manipulative behaviour on the one hand and the imaginatively emancipatory on the other.<sup>3</sup>

I met up with Carlo in a hotel restaurant in Perugia, a couple of hours from Florence by train. I had not seen him except briefly in Milan, 1969. Carlo had since then made a career as some kind of Green politico, not only in Perugia but also as onetime Commissioner for the Environment for the (then) Common Market in Brussels. We had lunch, he gave me his autobiography (Meana 2000). He was, as I already mentioned in Chapter 2, now once again Carlo *Ripa di* Meana. And, in his later-70s, still an active political figure in Italy. It was, for me, reassuring to find one of my old comrades, still somewhere on the left of the centre. And a living challenge to me to write my own autobio. Thanks, Carlo!

Back in Florence, Gina and I had a couple of days of tourism before our departure. Because there was a museum in it, we landed up on the opposite side of the square in which the International Committee of the WSF had been meeting up to the day before. We had noticed, around town, distinctive groups of *Peruanos populares* (poor Peruvians). Gina, as is her wont, began to talk with

one woman with uncommon grey strands in her black hair, and a padded jacket which looked as if it had been also slept in. We waited whilst she wrote a letter for Gina to take back to her family in La Victoria, a *barrio popular* in the centre of Lima. The woman, it appeared – and as we had guessed about the other Peruvians – was an illegal immigrant. She was in the square waiting for a church soupkitchen to open. Her tale was one of being unable to pay the rent on the family stall in La Victoria, of hoping to earn it here in Florence, of having so far found no job, of being dependent on church accommodation where she felt under surveillance. Was she, were they, aware of the European Social Forum that had just taken place? Or of the World Social Forum that was being planned on the other side of the *piazza*? Were those Forum people, who had been considering the place of the migrant labour question in the WSF, aware of the embodiment of this question, and therefore an essential part of the answer, 100 metres away? My guess is that – even if the *inmigrantes ilegales* had noted the massive peace march a couple of days earlier, an almost totally white affair – and even if those taking part in the Forum were acutely aware of the existence of such migrants in Italy, the two parties were actually moving on parallel lines that did not necessarily touch. In my later report on the Forum, entitled ‘Globalisation from the Middle’, I concluded:

Globalisation from below, in other words, has to be seen as an aspiration to be achieved by the Forum process, not a reality already existent and represented. This is a challenge to all of us, reformists and transformists, those at the centre and those at the periphery. And this is one part of that utopian horizon toward which we need, now, to move, with all deliberate haste.<sup>4</sup>

The issue was to return with a vengeance at the WSF in Nairobi, January 2007. And at time of writing it has still not been resolved.

## **Porto Alegre 2003: Life after Capitalism ... and Civil Society?**

I was determined that at the third WSF in Porto Alegre I would go as a member of *something*. I had discovered a ‘Forum within a Forum’, sponsored by the formidable Michael Albert of the multi-faceted ZMagazine operation,<sup>5</sup> in the US. This was called – challengingly – *Life after Capitalism* (LAC), and I thought it had the bite missing from the WSF’s now established but somewhat opaque ‘Assembly of Social Movements’.<sup>6</sup> The ASM was and is an action-orientated ginger group within the WSF, but it was certainly not going to discuss the meaning of the word ‘another’ in the WSF slogan, ‘Another World is Possible!’ LAC promised to do so. It had sections on Race, Immigration, Economic Vision, Work, Class, Globalisation, Political Vision, Cyberspace, Movements, Readings, Multimedia, and other types of activity. I volunteered myself to contribute to ‘Work’ and to coordinate ‘Cyberspace’. I was not too enchanted with all or almost all the Brits signed up being, in fact, from the theoretically dogmatic, organisationally sectarian and politically opportunist Socialist Workers Party, particularly since this meant multiple appearances of the same speakers wearing different hats - or masks? But I was more than happy to be in the same tent with Michael Albert himself (Participatory Economics), George Monbiot, Jeremy Brecher, Patrick Bond from South Africa, my new Serbian anarcho friend, Andrej Grubacic. And I was fascinated to know that the Chilean ex-Althusserian (or should that be the Althusserian ex-Chilean, since she appeared to be resident first in Cuba, then in Venezuela?) Marta Harnecker would be performing. I emailed Michael from Lima, declaring my preparedness, if someone could cover my costs, to go to Porto Alegre a couple of weeks earlier, if this

would be helpful. He told me to contact his main man in Brazil, the local editor of Brazil's, *Le Monde Diplo*, Antonio Martins. Martins was also a figure, I believe, in the WSF IC. Unfortunately, his email pigeonhole was choked.

So I only met up with Michael, his team, their brilliant posters, at our luxury hotel, Porto Alegre, as the WSF was starting. Here we had to deal with the awful chaos that I had confronted in my first WSF. Indeed, in my memory, it was worse. As the US military saying goes, this was a SNAFU (situation normal all fucked up). In the absence of anyone on the ground in POA, LAC found itself granted very low priority on anyone's list. And, for my second time at a WSF, I found myself spending most of my time trying to find out to where LAC activities had been moved, and paying cowboy taxi-drivers to take me there in exceedingly roundabout ways. The session on 'Work' didn't work. I think my 'Cybermedia' workshop was an exception: it took place where initially announced, I was joined by Arturo Escobar (Colombia/USA), by Will Doherty (USA) and by the Costa Rican feminist international radio specialist, Maria Suarez.

Michael thought his event had been sabotaged. I initially dismissed this as conspiracy theory, explaining the intimate relationship between a WSF and a SNAFU. But when erroneous meeting-place information was followed by more erroneous meeting-place information, he began to convince me. Not Gina. She, with her decades of experience with Latin American SNAFUs knew how to swim with or around these. We had a rather tense postmortem on Life after Capitalism. By this time I had come to the conclusion that the event had been, as I said there, over-structured and under-organised. I felt that Michael had maybe confused Brazil with Canada. However, this was not the sole limitation of LAC. I was appalled by the time and space given to the Socialist Workers Party – which already had a bad name in the global justice movement in the UK. And then I suffered the performance of Marta Harnecker in, I think, the 'Movement' session. Blithely ignoring the explicit time limitation, she – now in her role as Hugo Chavez promoter – simply took twice as much time as the previous speakers. I could not, after 30 minutes of propaganda, restrain myself, so introduced a very English 'point of order'. And was then subjected to a Chavez-style appeal of Harnecker to *El Pueblo Unido* (in this case the largely-Latino/a audience), to the effect that the importance of the Venezuelan Revolution required that she get just as much time as she wanted. Afterwards, both the Chair, the brilliant US journalist/researcher, Barbara Ehrenreich, and one of the SWP people came to congratulate me for my temerity. At this point, for the first time in print, I have to admit a hidden agenda. Gina, as a student in Santiago, during the Allende period had had to suffer the slings and arrows of La Harnecker's arrogance and theoretical correctness. Not that Gina would ever have put *me* up to putting Marta down, nor herself been so aggressive as I was, or even as impolite. But I have had long and bad experience with arrogant and boring propagandists. And, honestly, after all the frustrations with the WSF in general and with the LAC in particular, I just let my outrage get the better of me.

Once again it turned out that the main benefit for me of the WSF was the people I met and the problems we were confronting. In the conclusion to my paper on WSF 2003, I wrote:

I am concerned about the future of the Forum process but not worried. Pandora has opened her box, the genie is out of the lamp, the secret of fire for emancipatory movements is now an open one. This secret is ... to keep moving. In other words: a moment of stasis within a movement (institutionalisation, incorporation, bureaucratisation, collapse, regression) requires of activists they make ready to move to its periphery, or to move beyond it, or to create a new movement to advance, again, the potential represented by the old movement during its emancipatory moment. Already in Florence [the European Social Forum 2002] young libertarians were mumbling,

discontentedly, 'Another Forum is Possible' [...]. For the rest, socially-engaged intellectuals will find themselves energised by innovative social protest and original analyses of the local-national-global dialectic in Argentina ... by the Kidz in the Kamp who were discussing under a tree, and with informal translation, how to ensure that the emancipatory and critical forces have more impact on the Forum process, by the struggle, against all odds, of the US Znet people to mount 'Life after Capitalism', an event of post-capitalist proposition within the Forum; by the massive global anti-war demonstrations of February 15-16, 2003 – something that puzzled even radical specialists on the new social movements; by the increasing number of *compañeros*, of various ages, identities, movements and sexual orientations, who believe that, in the construction of a meaningfully civil global society, transparency is not the best policy but the only one. (Waterman 2003b)

Searching within my own bibliography, I discover dozens of short reports or longer analyses during the Decade of the Forum. I note, of course, the inevitable duplications or edited versions. But I also note the different languages in which such have been published. And that many of these have been both online and in printed version. And that that they have been in both popular and academic publications. And, more substantially, that my participation in Forum events seems to have encouraged or required me to contribute items on such 'beyond the union' topics as labour and the commons; the liberation of time from work; women, work and the WSF; old and new movements and global governance. And, finally, that my most ambitious intervention since 'social movement unionism', my Global Labour Charter movement project, was launched at a Forum. Playing off the 'old' against the 'new', the 'international trade union institutions' against the 'new global justice and solidarity movement' did not lead me to see them in terms of vice and virtue, nor to identify with the one against the other. I was certainly more *at home* in the WSF than in the traditional international union organisations. But this is because the traditional unions do not welcome – even on their increasingly professional and attractive websites – discussion, debate or even dialogue. However, I have also felt, despite the 'open space' at the Forums, that the WSF-union relationship was one of informal mutual instrumentalisation rather than of dialogue. The unions, until time of writing, have been giving increasing attention to the WSF, whilst tending to preserve their own stalls or events within such. And the WSF – if we can give this somewhat amorphous entity singularity – grants space to the unions without significantly challenging their representativity, their bureaucratic *modus operandi*, and their notion that another world for labour pre-existed the WSF in – say – Sweden around 1980).<sup>7</sup>

## **London 2004: Verticals and Horizontals<sup>8</sup>**

The third European Social Forum, London, 2004, represented a major struggle between the old and new emancipatory traditions within the Forum. I happened to be in London a couple of times during the run-up to this event. This was due to my involvement with the *Global Civil Society Yearbook* (Waterman and Timms 2004-05), based at the London School of Economics. Late-2004 I was able to attend the ESF itself. The tensions within and around the ESF were cast, by a young friend, Stuart Hodgkinson, in terms of the Verticals and the Horizontals. This was terminology he had picked up from Argentineans at a previous WSF. The Verticals here represented a marriage of convenience between the previously-mentioned SWP, the mayor's office of the Greater London Authority, and various long-

established trade unions and NGOs. The Horizontals represented a congeries of anarchist and libertarian networks, of independent socialists, and of anyone else suspicious of the Verticals. I proposed as a slogan, ‘Horizontals Don’t Take Things Lying Down’. Maybe they didn’t but, unfortunately, the Verticals had the experience, the money and the power.

As for the Horizontals (who regrettably didn’t care for my slogan), I happened to be at a first meeting of such, in a pub opposite the London School of Economics. And then, for one hour, I was the only Horizontal on the horizon. As I began to make my way out of the place, in seriously low dudgeon, I saw Dagmar, the German activist and wife of my London-based Italian *autonomista* friend, Massimo de Angelis, sitting with him and others, discussing what to do now that the room they had reserved had been given to – I dunno – a group of Morris Dancers. A ten-minute consultation enabled a consensus decision to move to another pub, ten minutes away. There the assorted Horizontals agreed to first order eats and drinks. Finally, maybe two hours after the appointed meeting time, business began ... with discussion of what was to be meant by ‘consensus decision-making’ at this meeting. At this point I left. True, I was still weakened by the chemotherapy I was undergoing.<sup>9</sup> But I had also decided in my mind that the Horizontals were not only incapable of organizing a piss-up in a brewery but of finding the brewery in which they would prove incapable of so doing.

In practice, things turned out rather better than could have been expected. Indeed, I thought it provided a *model* for the WSF in the future with ... a centre and a periphery? ... a core and satellites? ... or, if possible, a more positive spatial metaphor? In Alexandra Palace, an enormous, expensive, seriously isolated, exhibition hall in North London, the ‘official’ ESF took place, with the customary plenaries, workshops, celebrities, stalls, *son et lumière*. Police patrolled *inside* the event. Commercial caterers provided severely commoditised food and drink. Unions were represented by stalls, if not members. To the general south of this official ESF site there were located a series of others, set up by as many direct-action, libertarian or whatever groups and networks. One of them was further out in East London than I had ever been in my life. Indeed, I began to wonder whether I was going to land up in the Hook of Holland. But the self-catering was fine. Another session was held in the London School of Economics, opposite the non-meeting place of my first Horizontal encounter.

The LSE one was organised by my cuddly friend, Massimo de Angelis, lecturer at a less-central London university, owner – if this term is not inconsistent with horizontal identity – of the remarkable Commoner website.<sup>10</sup> I had actually proposed a title for this event: ‘Life Despite Capitalism’. Once again I was delighted to be in a Forum event – or Alternative Forum event – in which the word ‘capitalism’ was prominent. It also gathered an impressive array of speakers/contributors, and demonstrated to me that, yes, Another Forum was Possible. Possibility, of course, is not the same as achievement. And when I (re)presented my Florence ESF paper on labour and the commons (Waterman 2003a) to a more plebeian workshop audience, it took off like a heavy water balloon. I had thought of presenting my more plebeian argument concerning ‘social-movement unionism’. But this was by now, for me, an ageing argument (even if the phrase scores a zillion entries on Google). Massimo did, in a final plenary, promise us an evaluatory report or reflection. It is now 2014. I am still waiting ...

## **Mumbai 2005: Cyberspatial Engagement**

The first global WSF event, the fifth, outside Latin America was held in Mumbai, India, January 2005.

Although I followed its preparations and even wrote about it, I was not actually there, except in the form of the compilation I co-edited, long-distance, with Jai Sen and others. This we had discussed and developed since Porto Alegre 2002, I think. Given that the book was edited and published in New Delhi, the effort was basically that of Jai. I was mostly in The Hague, responding to emails, making suggestions, complaining about the cover chosen, worrying whether it would be out before Mumbai. It was out *just before* and I thought it a somewhat eccentric collection, until people who had bought it in Mumbai told me how good it was.<sup>11</sup> I called it the Big Orange Book, or BoB, since it was almost a kilo in weight and it was, well, orange. It had benefited from ‘development cooperation’ funding, something I had kept a long distance from whilst teaching about development at the ISS. Not that I had ever considered NGOs, and Northern funding for such, *evil*. But I did think one had to be upfront about receiving such funding and to consider the implications of this, explicit or implicit. In this case, there were no conditions at all. Indeed, one of my minor complaints on seeing the book, was that a major funder, the Dutch development-funding agency, Novib, had been acknowledged in such small letters. I had even played a role in getting the funding from Novib – which happens to be sited a five minutes by bike from where I live. It was thus, as I used to also say at the ISS – *double entendre* well in cheek – ‘just a stone’s throw’ from my workplace as well as my home...

OK, so we had this rather pluralistic, relevant and attractive-looking reader, printed and published at low cost in New Delhi. Jai and his colleagues just managed to get it in time to Mumbai. It then had, however, to be transported to me in the Netherlands, to a leftie distributor in the UK, to our collaborator, Arturo Escobar in the US. One day I received fifty or so, by multinational courier, from India. And one day the distributor received fifty or more, shipped (I think) from India. I then found myself back in the days of my newsletter, handling invoices, carrying 5-10 kilo of books hither and yon. The UK distributor eventually got tired of them, was moving his storeroom and gave us the option of picking them up or having them shredded. For the next year or two they occupied a considerable percentage of the rather small student room of another London Italian friend, Giuseppe Caruso. On my occasional visits to the UK, I would pick up maybe twenty and transport them, via Eurostar train, to The Hague. Finally Giuseppe was awarded his PhD – in which I had had a minor involvement – and had himself to move. We then, separately, underwent a short but intensive course in the economics of privatised cross-channel transportation. And, late 2009, they still occupied a considerable percentage of space in my spare room. In the meantime, with considerable effort on Jai’s part, BoB has been published in German, Spanish and Japanese. And, in an edition both abbreviated and updated, in Canadian (Sen and Waterman 2008?). Twentyfive or more of the latter were transferred from his luggage carrier to mine by the publisher, Dimitrios Roussopoulos, who had airfreighted and trundled them from Montreal to Malmö. And then from wherever he was in town to wherever I was. In process of doing the same from Malmö to The Hague, I managed to sell a few to Finnish *compañeros* at the Malmö railway station.

This abbreviated account may help explain why I favour electronic forms of publishing.

Since this time, ‘alternative’ forums have occurred within – well, actually around or outside – the WSF. But they have, regrettably, not achieved recognition as such by the WSF organising bodies, many of which prefer to deal with oppositions by providing space within. On the other hand, it is my impression that, despite the relative size and success of the London ESF, European Verticals have learnt to tread more lightly. But controversy does not so much dog the WSF as does the WSF exude and accept – even welcome – controversy. I participated in one or two teeny-weeny and seriously NGOised Social Forums in the Netherlands. But I skipped a couple of global ones and even issued a

self-denying ordinance against further attendance.<sup>12</sup> I was just finding them too stressful and more and more like directionless, feel-good, civil society jamborees. This did not, however, seem to prevent me from commenting on events I did *not* attend! Thus I entered the globalised controversy engendered by Samir Amin and friends, with their successive appeals or declarations (Sen and Kumar with Bond and Waterman 2007).

Samir Amin had made a series of attempts, within or on the edge of various Forums, to ‘politicise’ them – to move them from some kind of radical-democratic agora to some kind of vanguard political movement or party. Whilst disapproving of both the form and content of his initiative, which I considered in large part reproductive of twentieth century left modes of operation and ways of thinking, I simultaneously welcomed the shock to the heavily NGOised Forum. I would rather imagine the present counter-hegemonic movements networked together, involved in a constructive dialogue and dialectic. Indeed, in being prepared to dialogue with Amin and friends, particularly on labour, I was trying to act in this spirit. I think this was also the spirit of the earlier-mentioned compilation, in which all the documents and arguments were made available to the WSF community.

## **Nairobi 2007: Another World Of Labour is not yet Possible**

Now, like Oscar Wilde, I can resist everything except temptation. Thus was I tempted, by Swedish funding for an international labour seminar, to tuck away my self-denying ordinance at an earlier moment and attend the WSF in Nairobi, January 2007. This was, unfortunately, the most-criticised Forum yet. And criticised forcefully by Kenyans and other Africans, as well as by the ‘loyal alternative’ within the Forum, the Assembly of Social Movements. *Fortunately*, I accompanied Gina who, together with her Latin American Network, *Articulación Feminista Marcosur*,<sup>13</sup> was heavily involved with a pre-and preparatory Forum event of the by now well-established Feminist Dialogues.<sup>14</sup> Together with the Global March of Women,<sup>15</sup> with which it has differences, if not disagreements, I thought they provided interesting models for a *labour* presence within the WSF.

At the seventh WSF in Nairobi I was, for better or for worse, again heavily focused on this latter relationship. I say unfortunately because the relationship of labour to the WSF is a continuing source of dissatisfaction to me. Yet, until and unless others address it more extensively, energetically and profoundly than heretofore, I feel myself condemned to do so. I had actually been invited to write on this before Nairobi. What follows is extracted from my article in *TerraViva*. I identified two labour tendencies that would be present there:<sup>16</sup>

The ITUC, firmly rooted in Western Europe, is joined in its campaign by a number of other NGOs, mostly of West European origin and with a similar social-democratic or social-reformist background. However, both unions and labour-oriented NGOs from the Third World can be expected to endorse Decent Work. DW seems to mean the working conditions and rights that existed for many under the Welfare Capitalism of Western Europe before neo-liberal globalisation. The policy was actually invented within the International Labour Organisation. This is the UN’s inter-state organisation for labour, one in which the unions have a 25 percent representation alongside their ‘social partners’, capital (25 percent) and state (50 percent).

The other tendency, that I am calling the Emancipation of Labour (EoL) consists initially of a couple of autonomous initiatives, one rooted in South Africa, the other in Italy. The first

initiative, inspired by the Thirdworldist socialist thinker, Samir Amin, is supported by the Swedish Agora/Agenda NGO, is entitled 'Towards Transnational Solidarity? The Reorganisation of the Global Working Class'. Reversing the title, it would seem to be suggesting that the current restructuring of work and workers raises new challenges for global labour solidarity. The second project, sponsored by independent socialists and left unionists in Italy, is entitled 'Labour in Movement – Facing the Challenge of Globalisation'. It seems to be similarly reflecting on the consequences of globalisation for a labour movement going beyond the bounds of formal trade unionism.

In practice there was no marriage between the two latter projects, nor did my Emancipation of Labour tendency spring to light. The Decent Workers one tried, by fair means and others, to get the WSF to endorse or recognise their ILO-ITUC slogan as that of world labour (thus including also the 80 percent of workers whom they neither organise nor represent). The two alternative labour tendencies expressed the forum spirit by making space for each other. But neither of them, in my view, deserved the Emancipation of Labour medal I had dangled before them.

The 'Towards Transnational Solidarity' project, which was blessed by Samir Amin, was actually more weighted, I think, toward the North European social-reformist tradition. It was Swedish funded, academically-orientated ... and it was the one that enabled me to come to Nairobi! It also eventually led to a rather good compilation, in which I have a piece. I think it makes a substantial contribution to debate on the twentyfirst century labour force(s) and their political expressions (Bieler, Lindberg and Pillay 2008). It also has a Foreword by Samir Amin, entitled, in twentieth century Communist mode, 'Rebuilding the Unity of the "Labour Front"'. Samir Amin is never less than wide-ranging and challenging. Fortunately, however, his traditional assumptions about the vanguard role of the working class in reconstructing a 'united front' in no way inform the individual chapters, nor the editorial introduction and conclusion.

As for the 'Italian Project', this was a much more political or, actually, *left union* project, brought to life by Marco Berlinguer<sup>17</sup> of the *Rifondazione Comunista* and blessed, I believe, by the Italian metalworkers union, the FIOM.<sup>18</sup> Where the North European project was primarily engaged with an academic workshop in Nairobi, the Southern European one held a rather successful political meeting at the WSF main stadium site. Whereas, however, Marco was elsewhere engaged with a project referring to 'the emancipation of labour', he was here promoting something called – prosaically – 'Labour and Globalisation'. Whilst the workshop was also promoting an increased role for labour within the WSF, I thought that – from the name on down – this project lacked challenge and bite. It did not address itself to the hegemonic international labour institutions or ideology, and it did not present anything dramatically more radical than the latter. This argument was all spelled in my customary post-Forum report (Waterman 2007a, b).

## **Malmö and Caracas, 2008: Still Seeking the New Labour Internationalism**

I was sponsored for the fifth European Social Forum, Malmö, Southern Sweden by the Swedish Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. And then (with Gina) I very nearly missed its workshop due to the usual Forum problem of faraway places with strange-sounding names. Fortunately, we turned up, somewhat

late and definitely flustered but gave apparently relevant performances. This may be just as well, since my search for any significant international labour alternative at this forum event remained as unsuccessful as that of Monty Python for the Holy Grail.<sup>19</sup> The number of union and other labour events seemed to me higher than previously, and union concerns seemed to be broader, but the Labour and Globalisation group continued its pressure-group role, and this pressure-group tail was not noticeably wagging the dog. I concluded:

It is my belief – and experience at the WSF – that organised unionism internationally has long lost any sense of ‘another possible world’ beyond capitalism. The same is true for most of the union *left*. So the best these are able to reach for is either a pragmatic and defensive *reaction* to aggressive capitalist attack, or a return to a utopia of the national-industrial-capitalist past – the capitalist welfare state. The first is suggested in the Assembly of Social Movements declaration ... the second in Theme 10 of the ESF ... What I think we are left with after Malmö is the *hope* that something radical will develop from the bringing together of labour and social movements either at conferences on this topic or at the promised demonstrations. Or, I suppose, that the international Decent Work campaign might debouch onto a more profound questioning of and challenge to capitalism. (Waterman 2008a)

At the end of 2008 I was torn between sponsored invitations to two non-WSF events, an international union one in Oslo and a Thirdworldist one in Caracas. I felt bad about turning down the Oslo one, particularly since one of the key people there was Norwegian and international union officer, Asbjorn Wahl.<sup>20</sup> Involved, as he is, with the Norwegian Campaign for the Welfare State, the World Social Forum and with other local and international social movements, Asbjorn also writes critically on labour issues internationally. However, in pursuance of our joint exchange with Samir Amin over the future of the WSF, Jai persuaded me that I should go to Caracas, where Amin’s World Forum of Alternatives and/or Third World Forum was holding a massive conference in which labour was one of the themes.

Held in a large, luxurious but dismal post-Hilton hotel, isolated from Caracas by urban motorways and warnings of muggers, the event was blessed (and presumably extensively funded) by Hugo Chavez. It brought together a heterogeneous collection of mostly Third World and Thirdworldist intellectuals, plus a handful of others. What may have most motivated attendance was the opportunity of visiting Venezuela and hearing Hugo Chavez. Evidence for this is the eventual report-backs in the *South African Labour Bulletin* (Volume 33, No.1, 2009) of two well-qualified labour specialists from Southern Africa, Devan Pillay and Herbert Jauch, both being about the country rather than the conference or the workshop. The labour workshop was, no doubt, hampered by the heterogeneity of the participants, who included an aged Senegalese politico and the editor of a Communist (I suppose) US magazine. Also by the lack of interpretation, leading to domination by English speakers ... and new-social-movement-flavoured post-Marxists. Not that there was too much agreement even amongst these. But we did get out a statement, fed back into a never-ending plenary into which some working groups delivered presentations of such length and theoretical detail that I had to assume they were the pre-conference writings of the presenting individual. As a veteran ‘tourist of the revolution’ (Enzensberger 1976b), I resisted invitations to visit enterprises or communities. And as a veteran witness to five-hour speeches by *lideres maximos* (prime? top? leaders), I could not persuade myself to listen to that of El Hugo. I regretted this later on hearing my friends’ reports on his performance. But, on the other hand, these easily-taken acts of self-denial did allow me time to begin my customary

conference report (Waterman 2008b). It is, after all, by writing such that I justify, at least to myself, my acceptance of paid invitations.

And my haunting of the corridors and lounges did allow me to meet the brilliant and charming Canadian Marxist Political-Economist, Mike Lebowitz. Mike works at the *Centro Internacional Miranda* in Caracas, a regime-created think-tank. It was all rather reminiscent of Cuba and its foreign enthusiasts (including myself) in the 1960s. And I was hoping that such commitment would not, as then, lead to an international left divided into *encantados* and *desencantados* (the enchanted and disenchanting). Mike does do some praise-singing for the regime, along with more serious critique of Marx. But neither he nor other *Miranda* people seem necessarily uncritical.

On the other hand, one had to be concerned for the future of a unique social process when a newspaper columnist could write:

The Venezuelan Revolution depends on Comandante Chavez. This affirmation ... is indisputable: if we could even imagine for a moment this Revolution without Chavez, we would quickly realise that he is indispensable ... Anything that attacks the leadership of Chavez, attacks the Revolution. To be with Chavez means to be with everything he decides! (Aponte 2008. My translation).

As for the conference itself, most telling, for me, was that neither at the event nor in any website follow-up did we receive the promised synthesis of our various workshops' blood, sweat, toil and tears. Some months after the event, co-organiser François Houtart<sup>21</sup> sent me a message asking for a copy of the labour workshop's conclusions. I was somewhere between amusement and shock that the organisers had somehow lost or mislaid an egg we had laid with some difficulty. Nor could I imagine a WSF event in which a similar number of radical activists would have simply handed over their work, to be synthesised after the event by some – evidently inefficient – Politburo. Nor, for that matter, could I imagine that any serious radical international intellectual effort would end without even a whimper, never mind a cry. The exercise may have been considered a success by the Leader, the Party and the State of Venezuela, as well as Amin's World Forum of Alternatives and Houtart's Third World Centre (CETRI). But when some meagre conference materials finally appeared on the CETRI site, those on the labour workshop turned out to be some of my own papers rather than the outcome of the workshop that I had actually provided to François!<sup>22</sup> It may be that our workshop, like the conference itself, deserved to be hidden from history.

I should really have gone to Oslo. Though, if I had, I would have regretted not going to Caracas.

## **WSF9, Belem 2009: Which Other World is Desirable?**

*This capitalist development model crisis, a model that is Eurocentric, sexist and racist is absolute and leads us to the greatest socio-environmental climate crisis in the history of mankind. Structural unemployment is aggravated by the financial, economic, energy and production crisis, along with social exclusion, sexist and racist violence. So many and such deep crises at the same time shape an authentic crisis of civilisation .... The capitalist crisis of western civilisation forces us to reconstruct and to reinvent, new and diverse options of coexistence between nature and society, democracy, state and consumption. They call for new paradigms of coexistence and in that context, not only are "other*

*worlds possible”, but rather, they are urgent, and also, they are already being built from the first victims of the most barbaric forms of capitalist, colonial and contemporary violence: indigenous towns and communities, natives, farmers, riverside inhabitants, Quilombolas, Afro descendents, Garifunas, Caboclos, Dalits, among others, and their children who migrated to the poor slums of the cities; and all the other excluded, invisible and “untouchables” of the planet; ourselves included, who continue resisting, strengthening and updating alternative forms of technological, social, ethical, political, economic, cultural and spiritual organisation of the human race.<sup>23</sup>*

Belem, WSF9, was the first ‘thematic’ WSF, an innovation of which I approved. Being held at the mouth of the Amazon it was clearly appropriate to highlight both its ecology and its peoples (Osava 2009) Accustomed, as I had become to the often urbanised Central American and Andean *indigenas* it was something of a culture shock to be confronted with the Amazonians. Possibly it was for some Andeans also. There was some suggestion that the Amazonian *indigenas* had been patronised or treated as folklore by the WSF,<sup>24</sup> and also reports of tensions between the comparatively well-organised Andeans and the less-organised Amazonians. Such complaints are, however, customary amongst other previously-marginal categories at the WSF. Moreover, the indigenous at the forum produced a strikingly radical and original statement on the crisis of western capitalism as a civilisation. And calling for the ‘Articulation of Alternatives of Decolonisation, of Living Well, Collective Rights, Self-Determination and Climatic Justice’ (see quotation above). It later occurred to me that, in this focus on indigenous peoples, the WSF has been catching and contributing to a significant wave within the global justice and solidarity movement. In May 2009, there was such a wave of protest in the widespread and thinly-populated Peruvian Amazon that the government imposed a state of emergency that also reached Cuzco in the Andes. This was followed by the 4th Continental Summit of Nations and Pueblos of Indigenous Peoples in Puno, at the edge of Lake Titicaca, Southern Peru. And this was apparently inspired by the WSF model insofar as it invited guest speakers from other major Latin American social movements. And that it created special spaces for indigenous women and youth.

In Belem, however, I was still in pursuit of my Holy Grail – a labour internationalism appropriate to a globalised, informatised capitalism, now in deep economic and ideological crisis (Waterman 2009b). I did not, of course, find it in the now central and substantial ‘World of Work’ marquee, which incorporated the pro-governmental CUT and its international, the ITUC. Nor in the expensive and extensive operation set up separate from this by the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Nor, unfortunately, in the modest and marginal ‘alternative’ event set up by the Labour and Globalisation group. Whilst, indeed, its programme did mention the idea of a global labour charter, this got scant reference from the often interesting activists present. And, then, to my chagrin, it *disappeared* from its final declaration. An interesting new element in or related to the Labour and Globalisation group was a series of video interviews with labour activists done by the US-based Global Labour Strategies network. These later appeared on YouTube.<sup>25</sup> Whilst suggesting the different kinds of activists in and around L&G, only one of the interviews deals with this network itself. This is one with Marco Berlinguer himself and it suggested to me that the network has such a vague outline as to lack much force of attraction or capacity for action. Or, for that matter, the capacity to project itself on the Web.

The ‘World of Work’ tent was also the place where the Brussels-based ITUC and its social-reformist partner international NGOs (mostly also Brussels based), promoted their Decent Work project.<sup>26</sup> This gave me the uncomfortable feeling that, at this crucial moment in the history of capitalism, the WSF was posed somewhere between a post-neo-liberal (or global neo-Keynesian)

alternative and the kind of anti- or post-capitalist one suggested above.

A final labour (plus various others) assembly was more or less dominated by a declaration on the world financial crisis, presented by my 1980s *compañero* from ‘shopfloor labour internationalism’, the Brazilian World Council of Churches activist, Marcos Arruda. He urged on us a document entitled something like ‘Putting Finance in its Place’.<sup>27</sup> Like the ITUC, this declaration seemed to assume that there is an evil economy (finance, manned by vicious bankers and destroying jobs) and a ‘real economy’ (manned by virtuous industrialists, union-friendly, woman-friendly, creating jobs and dressed in green). ‘I will not vote for the restoration of a capitalism which is destroying our world and which is itself broken’, I said, to some mild and scattered applause. I do not wish to set up the two tendencies mentioned as a binary opposition, such as the hoary old Marxist-Leninist one, Reform v. Revolution. But I was worried at Belem that weight was shifting to the incremental end of the seesaw at the very moment in which an emancipatory alternative seemed increasingly called for.

During the Belem WSF, two longstanding *compañeros*, Walden Bello (2009) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009), seemed to be in accord that the WSF has – in the face of the global capitalist crisis (financial, industrial, ecological, climatic) – to have more explicit anti-capitalist orientations. Yet, a couple of months later, at my old institute in The Hague, Walden seemed to me to strike a solely incrementalist note. I was puzzled by this, wondering whether it had to do with the difference between the Brazil and the Netherlands or the WSF and the ISS. The latter – quite unfazed by the end of the End of History – continues with the Dutch delusion that the increasing leaks in the capitalist dyke can be fixed by sticking ever more fingers in it.

My disappointment with the labour contribution in Belem led me to a definitely sceptical conclusion on the Belem WSF more generally. Indeed, has also led me to even wider questions about the *meaning* of the concept ‘left’ as it is still internationally understood. I concluded:

*The left is dead, long live emancipation!* I have said this before ... but find it necessary to repeat [it] in the light of the Belem L&G and the WSF more generally. The origin of the word ‘left’ lies in the seating of the most democratic and egalitarian elements in the national assembly created by the French Revolution (also known as the *Montagne* because it sat top left). This ties the term to that particular revolution, and its outcome, a bourgeois liberal national industrial capitalist society. ‘Left’ is also a relative term (relative obviously, to ‘centre’ and ‘right’). It is surely the term most deserving of qualification as ‘a floating signifier’. Were the Communist states more ‘left’ than Social-Democratic ones. Are Trotskyists (which?) more ‘left’ than Anarcho-Syndicalists (which)? In contemporary times the concept has become problematic, even apparently amongst Marxist lexicographers!<sup>28</sup> Insofar as we are not only two hundred years from the French Revolution but, more significantly, living under a globalised, informatised, capitalist (dis)order, and insofar as we wish to distinguish ourselves from what has passed for ‘left’, then, surely, ‘another concept is possible’. I propose ‘emancipation’/‘emancipatory’ as appropriate to the radical-democratic transformation of contemporary capitalism .... ‘Emancipation’ and ‘emancipatory’ can and will be as much disputed as ‘left’, but at least they provoke a serious contemporary discussion that might surpass the arid and partisan claims amongst those still attached to the state, the party, the state-defined nation, the trade-union form traditional to the Eurocentric national industrial capitalist era. (Waterman 2009b)

One attractive informal feature of the forums, since the Malmö ESF, 2008, has been for me what I think of as Jai’s Open Restaurant. This is actually somebody *else*’s bar and restaurant, sought for by

the endlessly-energetic Jai Sen before the forum begins. It is an evening place of rest or revival, where we (whoever 'we' might be) can meet up after our customarily differing and exhausting daily itineraries, and to which we can invite others, or others can invite themselves. In Belem it was on some kind of jetty or barge, tethered to the river bank, and found only after a difficult search and then a long stumble through two or three dim and abandoned warehouses. Gina and I went there several times during our time in Belem, on one occasion being joined by Australian socialist eco-feminist, Ariel Saleh,<sup>29</sup> who could not find some other table at which she had expected to meet her friends. But Jai and I also have another, customary, date at forums, on Indian Republic Day, January 26. What we are there celebrating, however, is not this event but our joint birthday, though Jai's year of birth is rather later than mine. In Belem we celebrated it in one of the rare city cafés that had decent espresso. This one was between our hotel and Cacim's pension arrangement in a city centre apartment. To add to the exotic nature of Belem, the Cacim team had landed up with a Jewish family. This helped me to understand why Belem has an old, if not pre-Columbian, Jewish cemetery.

Individual or small-group meetings, informal or chance, are, for me a compensation for the *stürm und drang* of the formal forum programme – by which I mean 'that which appears in the forum's humungous timetable', whether it actually occurs or not.

Another such pleasure, this year, was for me to accompany Gina to the farmhouse of Forum-initiator, Candido Grzybowski, Director of the key Rio-based NGO, IBASE. IBASE is one of the key if not *the* key organiser of at least the Brazil-based Forums. Contrary to possible expectations, this is not a secret conclave of the Forum's Opus Dei, but another place of encounter, of relaxation, if also inevitably also one of friendly discussion and sometimes ferocious debate. I was not able, unfortunately, to take full advantage of this opportunity, and not only because the *lingua franca* was Spanish or *Portañol*, rather than English, Dutch or French. It was because I was having serious heart trouble – only, fortunately, of the physical kind. The doctors called this an 'attack', though my feeling was that it was only a skirmish. Here I have to say that I was fortunate to be hospitalised in Rio rather than Belem. And, possibly, in Rio rather than The Hague, where my own (today long ex-) general practitioner had never thought my elevated blood pressure required the attention of a cardiologist! As a middle-class traveller with the requisite insurance, I landed up, in Rio, in a luxurious private clinic – looking like a set for the Brazilian version of *ER* – in a private room, surrounded by handsome specialists (male) and beautiful nurses (female).<sup>30</sup> I also have to say that I have great memories of Rio, which, because of its unique location, surrounded us with its mountains and tropical vegetation. Fond memories, despite my having had my final (nearly) heart-trouble symptoms on the beach of Ipanema, known internationally for quite other reasons.

## **Is Another World Social Forum Possible?**

After around a decade of involvement with the World Social Forum and related events, I feel some kind of conclusion is called for. This is difficult given that the forums continue. But, far from the madding crowd, in Madison, Wisconsin, USA, late-2009, the following occurred to me.

*Firstly.* A meeting of the WSF's International Committee took place in Montreal, Canada, October 2009. This was, as usual, first reported by the Network Institute for Global Democracy (NIGD). The reporter, or rapporteur, was a new one, Giuseppe Caruso, who had done his PhD on the organisation of the Mumbai Forum of 2004.<sup>31</sup> Giu's report suggested that the mumbles and grumbles of the

‘emancipatory’ tendency in and around the WSF were impacting significantly on, or simply reflected within the IC.<sup>32</sup> According to this report there was wide agreement that we were confronted with a general crisis of capitalism, one that revealed how capitalism was endangering the existence of humankind. However, something more controversial was being said at the IC:

Why did the activists of the world movements and of the WSF IC lose the opportunity to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the global crisis? No words were spared on the analysis of the possible reasons but a degree of convergence was rather soon generated. The global crisis is *consequence of and has in turn consolidated a systemic crisis of the global left*. In the first instance the global left has allowed capitalism to go unchallenged while implementing the policies that generated the conditions for the current crisis and after the crisis exploded was not able to incisively lead the way for change. This crisis is so deep and structural that it has involved the same WSF, inducing its IC members to questioning its role and its current nature and possibilities to influence change. A common voice responded to this painful cry that this analysis only depicts one aspect of the crisis of alternatives. The WSF indeed has produced, generated, incubated thousands of alternatives, it is indeed been a constant generator of viable alternatives, but the movements that were supposed to implement those alternatives have failed in their ultimate task to promote that change. *If a crisis existed it was not to be considered a crisis of the WSF but a crisis of the movements that converge in its space*. (Caruso 2009. My emphasis. PW).

The report continued:

The WSF needs to evolve from its open space identity, in which no representation and no direct involvement in social change process is sought for, towards becoming a more assertive actor in the global dynamics of resistance to capitalism and for change.

I am here less concerned with self-justification (since my voice was only one of many and since the ‘emancipatory’ critics may be pushing in different directions), but I do anyway welcome the evidence of IC criticism of not only the WSF but also of the ‘movements that converge in its space’. This cap fits both the traditional and the ‘alternative’ labour bodies present within the WSF. Furthermore, there are questions in my mind of 1) whether this new mood of dissatisfaction within the IC can overcome the inertia of the now-decade-old model, 2) whether the funding agencies would be either financially capable of funding, or politically willing to fund a WSF that was moving from anti-capitalist rhetoric or analysis to a post-capitalist vision and strategy, and 3) whether, for example, the traditional international trade unions would tolerate such a radicalisation of the Forum.

*Secondly*. I was struck by the analogies between the crisis of the left social movements globally and those of Latin America in particular. These are, after all, *national* movements, largely addressed to their specific state-defined nations, even if the movements are sometimes also sub-national (the indigenous ones) and regional (the indigenous ones again). This thought was provoked by an essay of the Uruguayan analyst, Raúl Zibechi (2009). Himself reflecting on a decade of Latin-American history, Zibechi produces a differentiated analysis but summarises as follows:

1. More important than the differences between these processes is the fundamental element they have in common: the return to a central state that has been converted into an actor for change;
2. The marginalisation of the social movements, which in the 1990s and at the start of 2000

were the main players in resistance to the neoliberal model;

3. The dominant contradiction has been the dynamic between the government and the right, an issue that pushed many social movements into a pro-state position that has appeared largely avoidable.

Some tendencies aim to move the social movements toward new bases of support, employing new causes and forms of intervention. So let us now consider the global level: 1) not all the inter-state institutions have been converted into actors for change, but at least the ILO could be considered to be attempting this role; 2) the marginalisation of the WSF and the global social movements seems to be what the WSF IC is concerned about; 3) one can hardly suggest a contradiction between the right (neoliberal globalisers) and the inter-state agencies as a whole, but many NGOs, some social movements (particularly the traditional union internationals), and many left (of centre) social theorists are hoping for or depending on this; 4) some global tendencies, such as the twentyfirst century anarchists, left libertarians – those I generalise as the new emancipatory tendency – have been aiming ‘to move the [global] social movements toward new bases of support, employing new causes and forms of intervention’. How does Zibechi characterise these, and their relationship to the state, in Latin America?

In the first stage after the ‘progressive’ governments took power, the subordination of social movements to their respective governments predominated, resulting in demobilisation, divisions, and the fragmentation of initiatives. Only small groups maintained open confrontation, while the majority collaborated with the state in return for subsidies and other material benefits, including positions in state agencies and institutions. Another large part of the original collectives simply dissolved.

In contrast, the social movements of Chile, Peru, and Colombia have taken important steps forward. In these three countries, it is the indigenous peoples that have taken the initiative. The Mapuche people of Chile are recovering from the destruction caused by the antiterrorist law inherited from the Pinochet era and reactivated by the ‘socialist’ Ricardo Lagos (President from 2000-2006), and together with students and diverse sectors of the workers’ movement (miners and foresters in particular) are engaging in an important revitalisation of their movement.

Well, at regional level and beyond, the new indigenous movements have been making their quite specific impact on the global social movements, starting with the Zapatistas of South Western Mexico. Indeed, the Zapatista movement has to be reckoned with as one of the major stimuli to the global justice and solidarity movement (GJ&SM) in general and to the World Social Forum in particular. A similar case might be made for Via Campesina, the global network of small-peasant and landless movements (Waterman 2009a). It occurs to me, however, that major contributions are being made by events, organisations, movements and even individuals who have no presence within the WSF and may not recognise themselves as members of, affiliates of or even to have affinity with the GJ&SM.

Writing these words in the USA, 2010, I could not but bring to mind three significant phenomena, even if their ‘global’ nature may be limited to the cross-national, or peripheral. Being in the globalising/globalised USA, of course, they cannot but have major international implications. And, exceptionally, two of them have to do with workers and one addresses itself to these.

*First* there was the USA’s largest ever Mayday protest (preceded by impressive strikes), that of the

largely casualised workforce of immigrant and illegal workers in 2007. These overwhelmingly Latino/a workers identified themselves by their flags and banners as much as nationally- or ethnically-discriminated as they did as exploited workers. Their demonstration call looked something like this:

**We are calling**

**A national day of multi-ethnic unity with youth, labor, peace and justice communities in solidarity with immigrant workers and building new immigrant rights & civil rights movement!**

**Wear White T-Shirt, organise actions to support immigrant rights!**

**WE ARE ALL HUMANS! NO ONE IS ILLEGAL!<sup>33</sup>**

*Secondly*, and overlapping with these are those ‘poor workers’ unions’ (Tait 2005) – that ‘social justice unionism’, characterised and promoted by Fletcher and Gapasin (2008).

And *thirdly*, film-maker Michael Moore, with his outrageous anti-capitalist movie, *Capitalism: A Love Story*.<sup>34</sup> I saw it in one of several hundred US commercial cinemas launching this anti-capitalist tract. It surely has implications for a WSF (and a broader movement) often nervous of naming the beast ‘capitalism’, rather than ‘neo-liberalism’ or ‘globalisation’. And, indeed, of seeking alternatives to, rather than alternatives for, capitalism. I do not consider this movie to have the aesthetic unity of, for example, *Roger and Me*.<sup>35</sup> And, for that matter, it has its own ambiguities with respect to Barack Obama. But all credit to Michael Moore for the following: saying of capitalism, it can’t be regulated, you can’t regulate evil; for tapping into the radical tradition of Christianity in a widely religious country; for showing community resistance to house repossession, and a worker-run factory (in Madison itself!); for stating that the alternative to capitalism is ‘democracy’ (what I would call radical-democracy) and for playing over the final credits all three verses of an American version of *The Internationale!* If Michael Moore is prepared to take the risk of doing this in the heart of capitalist darkness, then he provides a model for the WSF and the GJ&SM more generally.

As of mid-2010 the World Social Forum appeared to be edging in the two directions I had been arguing for, the local and the cyberspatial. It even seemed to be going further than I might have dared to hope, in putting on its agenda a new kind of universalism (for which see below)!

‘Local’ has to include the US Social Forum, Detroit, June 2010, widely considered to provide a more-advanced or more-radical model than the global edition. This was the establishment of what Jeff Juris had called, in relation to an earlier US Social Forum, an ‘intentional open space’.<sup>36</sup> The intentionality, in this case, seemed to me to have been related to Liberation Theology’s ‘preferential option for the poor’.<sup>37</sup> Whether this option actually resulted in a changed class composition of participation remained unclear to me (there could have simply been more participation by university-educated ‘representatives of the poor’). But the intention is not to be sniffed at. Labour, at the USSF, was apparently represented neither by traditional labour institutions, nor by their ‘loyal opposition’, the European-based Labour and Globalisation network, but by an ‘excluded workers’ network,<sup>38</sup> proposing a reinvention of the (US) labour movement, bottom up.

‘Locality’ was intended also by a preparatory meeting for the World Social Forum, due to take place in Dakar, Senegal, early 2011. ‘Locality’ was here to be understood as applying not simply to a locale or place but to African and diaspora specificities:

It will also provide an opportunity to give special stress to the African realities of struggle and

transformation with a desire to learn also from the histories of oppression, rebellion and transformation of the African diasporas, the struggles against slavery and the civil rights movement, and to celebrate the independence of the African continent the 50th anniversary of which is for many countries this year. (Caruso 2010).

Discussion on a 'new kind of universalism' was also ambitiously proposed:

The new universality discussed by the Senegalese facilitators of the next WSF ... will contribute to redefine the foundations of a new culture of politics and a new activist mentality centred on the political recognition of difference and privileging the values of hospitality, conviviality and solidarity against the uncompromising individualism and the dynamics of competition and utility maximisation at the heart of capitalism. The urgency of such emancipatory vision is undeniable and fully expressed by the destructive nature of the current economic, financial, social and environmental crises. The new universality won't be centred on the integration of the 'South' into the 'North'" but in the radical reformulation of the values that organise society and people's relationships and lives. The cultural inspirations of such vision are gathered from all regions of the world and value diasporic experiences across them. Migrants and women are crucial in contributing to shape the new universality as they are among those most affected by the alienating and atomising practices of capitalism. (Caruso 2010)

Given the nervousness of many in the newest global social movements about past (and particularistic) universalisms, or even the idea of a search for such, I was left wondering whether this subject would be even broached at Dakar and, if so, what would come out of dialogue about such.<sup>39</sup>

But given these signs of continuing and sometimes surprising life in the WSF, one would have to agree with Mark Twain when he said that newspaper accounts of his death had been premature.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For which see Alvarez (1998)

<sup>2</sup> Well, possibly limited to the *Rifondazione Comunista*, led by the charismatic Fausto Bertinotti, which was a somewhat ambiguously new and leftist party [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist\\_Refoundation\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Refoundation_Party).

<sup>3</sup> The SWP eventually found itself between a hard rock (vanguardism) and a complex place/space (the twentyfirst century) in the UK, 2013. This started out with an accusation of sexual harassment by one woman member against a male leader. But it then mushroomed into one concerning, precisely, the leadership's vanguardism, and its attempt to discipline dissident members for some non-party behaviour on Facebook! When the matter boiled over at a Party Congress, the leadership won (which is surely the purpose of vanguardism). Whilst this somewhat pale and pathetic remainder of the Bolshevik tradition may well survive, the moment did reveal what happens when an emancipatory organisation of nineteenth to twentieth century origin is confronted by the emancipatory ideas, places and spaces of the twentyfirst.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.voiceoftheturtle.org/show\\_article.php?aid=301](http://www.voiceoftheturtle.org/show_article.php?aid=301).

<sup>5</sup> <http://zcomm.org/znet/>.

<sup>6</sup> This extract from a work by the excellent Janet Conway is one of the very few that turns up on a Google search. It does not, however, tell us much about who, how, where and when, even if it does say what and why. So the Assembly of Social Movements remains 'hidden in full light'. At least as far as I am concerned.

<sup>7</sup> Since the WSF does not have the singularity one can assert of, for example, the ITUC, one should rather say that no organisation, network or theoretical/ideological tendency *within* the forum has questioned the nature and role of the ITUC and its affiliates. Far less has the Eurocentred and Eurocentric ITUC been *challenged*.

<sup>8</sup> I have already referred to the brilliant participant-observer reflections on the London ESF of Marianne Maeckelbergh (2009: 26-110).

<sup>9</sup> Have I failed to mention that around mid-2004 I was operated for cancer of the spleen, with the result that I have no spleen but (at time of writing) also no cancer? I find this a not unequal exchange.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.commoner.org.uk/>

<sup>11</sup> Heavy reference was still being made to BoB many years later (Conway 2012).

<sup>12</sup> As may be suggested below, this ordinance has no teeth. Thus did I find myself accompanying Gina to a ‘thematic’ WSF event in PoA, early-2012, which turned out to be a mostly-Brazilian preparation for the coming Rio+20 environmental conference. Where Portuguese wasn’t spoken, Spanish was. English translation/translators were thin on the ground. My main reward at this event was finding on a bookstall a remarkable book in Portuguese about Via Campesina, a major presence in the WSF, and in itself a fascinating example of the new networking internationalisms (Braga Viera 2010). The most original aspect of the book is its placing of VC in the history of internationalism. I taught myself some Portuguese – some written Portuguese – by reading it on the plane back to Lima. Gina was scandalised when I reported this reward to her. Maybe by admitting it in public I will shame myself out of attending any more WSFs!

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.mujiresdelsur-afm.cotidianomujer.org.uy/que-somos>.

<sup>14</sup> For which see [http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=112&Itemid=261](http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=112&Itemid=261).

<sup>15</sup> The World March of Women ([http://www.marchemondiale.org/index\\_html/en](http://www.marchemondiale.org/index_html/en)) is an ongoing political campaign or network, in the left-feminist tradition, with member groups worldwide, which produced the remarkable Women’s Global Charter for Humanity in 1994, [http://www.marchemondiale.org/qui\\_nous\\_sommes/charte/en](http://www.marchemondiale.org/qui_nous_sommes/charte/en). I consider this a provocative model for the labour movement.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ipsterraviva.net/TV/Nairobi/en/viewstorydc9a.html?idnews=777>.

<sup>17</sup> I had met Marco several times because of his connection with the Transnational Institute (TNI) in Amsterdam and the Networked Politics project there of Hilary Wainright. He described himself on this project’s website as follows:

Marco Berlinguer was born and lives in Rome. In the last years he contributed to the foundation of Transform! Italia and of different European networks as: Transform! Europe; Euromovements; Eurotopia; The Network for the Charter for Another Europe. He is mainly engaged in studying and experimenting new forms of connection between social and political action and research; and between new forms of production of information, knowledge and communication and the production of new forms of dissident and transformative subjectivity. In the last years edited “World Social forum: A Debate on the Challenges for Its Future” (2003); “La Riva sinistra del Tevere Mappa e conflitti nel territorio metropolitano di Roma” (2004); and “Pratiche costituenti \_ Spazi, reti, appartenenze: le politiche dei movimenti” (2005). Contact: [marco.berlinguer\(at\)transform.it](mailto:marco.berlinguer@transform.it)

Apart from his personal characteristics and activities, I was attracted by Marco’s antecedents as the son of Enrico Berlinguer, onetime General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party and with Enrico’s brother, Giovanni, leading figures in, respectively, the post-Second World War International Union of Students and World Federation of Democratic Youth.

<sup>18</sup> For which see [http://internationalviewpoint.org/article.php3?id\\_article=132](http://internationalviewpoint.org/article.php3?id_article=132).

<sup>19</sup> ‘According to Christian mythology, the Holy Grail was the dish, plate, or cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper, said to possess miraculous powers .... The Grail plays a different role everywhere it appears, but in most versions of the legend the hero must prove himself worthy to be in its presence. In the early tales, Percival’s immaturity prevents him from fulfilling his destiny when he first encounters the Grail, and he must grow spiritually and mentally before he can locate it again. In later tellings the Grail is a symbol of God’s grace, available to all but only fully realised by those who prepare themselves spiritually, like the saintly Galahad.’ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy\\_Grail](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Grail). This is the ‘optimism of the will’ version. Given that, unlike Galahad, I feel spiritually unprepared for the task, I prefer the ‘scepticism of the intellect’ one. This is in ‘Monty Python and the Holy Grail’ (1975), a surrealist comedy movie which has a scene in which the Knights of the Round Table are confronted – in their endless holy quest – by two muddy members of a self-managing anarcho-syndicalist commune.

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.aswahl.net/ENGELSK/on\\_myself.html](http://www.aswahl.net/ENGELSK/on_myself.html)

21 I resist the temptation to airbrush François out of this book, given his exposure as, and admission to having been, in the past, yet another of the priestly child-abusers. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois\\_Houtart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Houtart). I had appreciated my several encounters with him over the years. So far, to the best of my knowledge, he has not taken the opportunity to publicly recognise that his misdemeanour and shame is more than a personal shortcoming and due to the literally inhuman powers given to, and self-denials demanded of, priests by the Catholic Church. By 2014, François seemed to have moved more or less permanently to Latin America, where he continues to contribute to the global justice movement.

22 [http://www.forumdesalternatives.org/EN/readarticle.php?article\\_id=7070](http://www.forumdesalternatives.org/EN/readarticle.php?article_id=7070).

23 <http://www.indigenousportal.com/News/Declaration-of-Indigenous-Peoples-at-the-World-Social-Forum-Bel%C3%A9m-Amazon-Brazil.html>

24 [http://openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read\\_article.php?articleId=798](http://openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=798). For an evaluation of indigenous participation in Belem, consider an innovatory piece on coloniality, decoloniality and communication practices by Stephansen.

25 <http://www.youtube.com/user/GlobalLaborBlog#p/u/11/PaGAYBqNP0sFirefoxHTMLShellOpenCommand>).

26 <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article2733>.

27 This same document, or possibly a revised version, was later published, with an impressive list of institutional and individual signatures, <http://www.choike.org/campaigns/camp.php?5>. Reading it later, I think I would qualify it as *left* Neo-Keynesian. It does seem to me that it is insufficient, right now, to talk of ‘a new paradigm’, including ‘decent work’, rather than a post-capitalist order and the struggle against alienated labour.

28 <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/l/e.htm>

29 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariel\\_Salleh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariel_Salleh).

30 Eternal – or at least lifelong – thanks to those at the Clinica Pro-Cardiaco in Rio and later the Clinica San Felipe in Lima (where I was re-hospitalised after two angioplasty ops in Rio). And then to Gina and her friends in Rio – Moema Miranda and her husband, Leandro – who took care of us. And then to Gina’s family and friends in Lima who did likewise. And also, I should add in 2014, to the Dutch specialists who had decided that two of my past complaints no longer needed their ‘watchful waiting’ by annual checkups.

31 He has also made it available free online, <http://giuseppecaruso.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/organising-global-civil-society.pdf>.

32 I am assuming the report is a balanced one, in part because its author is in no sense an ultra-radical and in part because of an NIGD tradition of sober reporting. I long awaited a more official report of the IC meeting but I cannot recall seeing such. Or maybe I did see such but found it less pointed than that of the NIGD.

33 <http://www.immigrantsolidarity.org/MayDay2007/index.html>

34 For which see various clips and teasers on YouTube, such as <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeROnVUADj0&feature=channel>.

35 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger\\_%26\\_Me](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_%26_Me).

36 [www.jeffreyjuris.com/articles/Juris%20Spaces%20of%20Intentionality.pdf](http://www.jeffreyjuris.com/articles/Juris%20Spaces%20of%20Intentionality.pdf).

37 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Option\\_for\\_the\\_poor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Option_for_the_poor).

38 See here

39 ‘A New Universality’ may have been on the menu for the Dakar WSF, February 2011, but seems not to have been actually dished up. I would have thought such a new universality could be spelled out in terms of ethics, epistemology, processes/relationships, without reproducing the limitations of the 10 Commandments, the US Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Communist Manifesto, or the 21 Conditions of Membership of Lenin’s Communist International. But, then, I have not had the temerity to try this, sticking more modestly to my Global Labour Charter Project.

<sup>40</sup> Early 2013, excitement about the WSF, was high. This not only because of tensions of post-dictatorship Tunisia, with which the WSF would be inevitably confronted. But also because it looked as if the newest waves of the global justice and solidarity movement – not only the Arab Spring but Occupy, and related youthful movements in Western Europe, North America, Chile and elsewhere – were going to be present there.

## CHAPTER 10

# Let's Hear it (also) for the Rootless Cosmopolitans? 1

Rootless Cosmopolitans – whether with this or related names – had a bad press during the twentieth century.

Not only from Stalin, who was responsible for popularising the concept *bezrodniy kosmopolit* (literally: a countryless cosmopolitan, in Stalin's mind a stateless one also). One could, perhaps, expect a bad press from all worshippers of Blood and Soil.<sup>2</sup> After all, the attachment or appeal to these has been a powerful way of bringing or holding people(s) together, and controlling them, during an epoch in which 'all things solid turn into air' (Marx and Engels 1848).

Whilst the most radical of the nineteenth century Left were often exiled or otherwise uprooted cosmopolitans, and had The International as their 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983),<sup>3</sup> this was before the nation-state – actually the *state-defined nation* – had really appealed to and sunk roots amongst the masses. I do not believe that the Marxists ever really theorised internationalism.<sup>4</sup> They might have preached it and even practiced it – if in ever more specific, temporary, pragmatic or ambiguous ways. But what they endlessly wrote about and energetically theorised was *nationalism*.<sup>5</sup>

OK, that was *then*. But one would have thought that, by the twentyfirst century, at least Marxists would have recognised that *this* is now.<sup>6</sup>

So how is it possible that even in our globalised era, with all its increasingly global threats and promises – with all the talk of 'global civil society', and of the necessity for 'democratic cosmopolitanism', of 'global solidarity', no one raises a cheer or two for the rootless cosmopolitan?<sup>7</sup> Even Sydney Tarrow – a sociologist of social movements, a social historian, an imaginative writer, a humanist and a reformer – seems unable to raise a cheer for the rootless cosmopolitan. Whilst evidently dismissing Stalin, and critiquing a wide range of contemporary literature attempting to name and tame this significant new historical actor, he places all his bets on the 'rooted cosmopolitans' (Tarrow 2005: Ch. 3).

Now, let's see. I began drafting this in Lima, Peru, which is where my partner/colleague/*compañera* (since November 2012, wife) of more than two decades lives. But where I reside (still have a family, an apartment, a bicycle, health insurance, receive a pension, pay taxes) is in the Netherlands. I am, however, actually English, though I have not lived in the UK on a continuing basis since around 1965. I do not master Dutch or Spanish (I put this politely). And whilst I may feel most at home in England I hardly ever visit this home. I have travelled much and widely. Today, I suppose, I *inhabit* The Hague, as I have done since 1972. But, beyond my family and a handful of friends and *compañer@s*, I have limited contact with Dutch social, political and cultural life (or maybe it is the other way round). Where I seem to have most relationships is in that new found land, Cyberia.

## Re:Exploring Cyberia

I spent quite some time exploring Cyberia in the 1980s-90s.<sup>8</sup> Today I visit its most familiar parts, travelling in some of its most familiar vehicles, Firefox, Thunderbird or Gmail for email, Google for

Web searches, Skype for free or cheap phone calls. Before retirement in 1998 I made two or three Power-Point productions. I have various bits of hard and software on my netbook, and on a PC assembled at a shop round the corner. I am subscribed to 10-20 electronic lists. I am active on maybe four or five of such. I consult Wikipedia frequently whilst writing, thus saving hours of work with paper dictionaries, biographies, libraries and bibliographies. I look for old books and even recent ones on Amazon and Abebooks.<sup>9</sup> I order ‘stuff’ with my credit card or Paypal. I also have certain computer accessories or extensions: a secondhand iPhone (which my grandchildren would not be seen dead with), a separate hard-drive for backup, one or two memory sticks.

I do spend an hour or two every day checking and responding to my email. And Skypeing. Indeed, I cannot imagine having kept my ‘living apart together’ relationship with my partner, Gina ‘No Fear of Flying’ Vargas, going since 1990 without these. Gina herself does not claim any particular computer skills, but she is occasionally involved in collective online chats (conversations) with her own various international networks. I have been so far little infected by chats or, for that matter, conventional ‘social networking’. I am sure these are of value in internationalist labour and social-movement networking, even bearing in mind the manner in which they can be used by capital, state and nefarious social movements.<sup>10</sup>

I have, however, been actively involved in an international/ist labour alternative to Facebook, called UnionBook.<sup>11</sup> Insofar as UnionBook focuses on, or might create a new international labour community across and beyond the institutionalised union movement, and in so far as webmaster, Eric Lee, continues to resist the temptation to operate also as a ‘webfilter’ or ‘webcensor’ – or even as a modest ‘moderator’ – this pioneering project could develop beyond the confines of the Western-based international trade union organisations with which Eric is identified.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, this seems to be occurring, to the point at which I think we can begin to talk of International Labour Communication by Computer as ‘ILCC 2.0’. This may be initially represented by the Organising Network (ON), created by a relatively new network, Union Solidarity International (USI).<sup>13</sup> Walton Pantland, the UK-based South African behind both initiatives, took a major step forward, I think, in declaring ‘every social network has an ideology’ (Pantland 2014). USI is as union-orientated as Union Book. But in raising the issue of what kind of ghost is in what kind of machine, he makes it possible or even necessary for us to look at implications of the cyber-technology we are *ourselves* using (and that, inevitably, is using us).<sup>14</sup> At time of writing, I also hear rumours of a LaborLeaks site!<sup>15</sup>

I have co-edited two-three books, with a *compañero* in India, Jai Sen.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, these must be 90 percent dependent on ICT (information and communication technology). The 10 percent that *didn’t* benefit from the web proved to be the Achilles heel of the operation. Thus, we were able to edit and print cheaply in India, but were then confronted with the logistics of moving these factory-age products, weighing up to 700 grams, to anywhere else in the world. There are similar problems with the production of the attractive and professional series in Lima, which has published compilations of both myself and Gina.<sup>17</sup>

So, for the last few years I have been surfing the web, looking at possibilities for ‘cutting out the middleman’ in the circulation of ideas – the print publisher, the journal or magazine editor ... capitalism.<sup>18</sup> Almost all my articles go first online, commonly marked ‘Discussion Draft’ or ‘Work in Progress’. I more or less gave up submission of my stuff to the then printed *Working Papers* series of the Institute of Social Studies, where I worked till 1998, when I was quite arbitrarily informed that these were now being evaluated as ‘final-form’ publications! Some *final* final-form print-publishers or editors – including those on the Left – object, or reject, when I say that my draft material is online.

The overwhelming majority do not. I have also produced online a couple of compilations.<sup>19</sup> In the continuing absence of one of those familiar personal websites or blogs, these have been vital spaces in my efforts at becoming a ‘nomad of the present’ (Melucci 1989).

Most academics are either disgruntled – or grunted – slaves to an increasingly competitive, commodified and hierarchical system intended to discipline or punish (grade, promote or ‘let go’). Left academics are often resigned to conditions they reject both in theory and in the world beyond their profession. Many Left journals that sprang up on the periphery of the system in the 1970s-80s modified their radical names and/or went commercial. This does not necessarily mean they lose intellectual or political value. But there is a price attached (commonly a subscription price, beyond reach outside the world’s wealthier universities). How many Left, Critical, Revolutionary or Emancipatory journal articles have I been *unable* to access because I have been retired for a decade and a half and no longer have unlimited free access to such?

Fortunately, some new academic journals are not only circumventing the print publishing juggernauts but escaping to Cyberia. Others are involved in the expanding cyberspace commons by adopting one or other Creative Commons formula.<sup>20</sup> I was happy to be invited to join the Editorial Board of a new global labour journal,<sup>21</sup> edited by some of my old international labour studies interlocutors from the 1980s-90s, Eddie Webster and Robert O’Brien. My pleasure lay partly in the title but particularly in this being an open-access electronic journal. These features are, of course, no guarantee of the journal becoming either global in authorship (the first issue was heavily Canadian) or radical in content (subsequent issues being rather incremental-reformist in orientation).

So I was more enthusiastic about joining another online journal, of which the main title was the vaguely ecumenical *Interface*, but sub-titled, more promisingly, *A Journal for and about Social Movements*.<sup>22</sup> This one is not so much a traditional academic journal, tele-transported to cyberspace, as it is one thought out in terms of 1) the new global social movements, and 2) the possibilities of cyberspace. The first implies that it be seriously international in authorship and readership. It has ‘spokespersons’ (in Old English they would have been called ‘editors’) in a wide spread of world areas, including previously marginalised ones like the Arab world and the ex-Soviet bloc. It also intends, like my *Newsletter of International Labour Studies* from the 1980s,<sup>23</sup> to be authored and read by both academics and activists, and activist-academics. It is developing editorial groups for a large number of different world areas, including commonly forgotten ones. The cyberspace aspect implies not only open access but also the possibility for rapid feedback and dialogue, both in the publication and on an editorial email list for ‘spokespersons’.<sup>24</sup> I will follow (and contribute to) such new projects. But, although my expertise lies primarily in the area of global labour studies, I feel definitely more at home in that of the new global social movements.

## **Internationalism at a Slight Angle**

I have to recognise that we rootless cosmopolitans – at least those of us with global social emancipatory pretensions or demonstrable activity – are few. I am here clearly distinguishing ‘us’ from not only the jet-set business cosmopolitans, journalists and academics (for whom see Peter van der Veer below), but also from the majority of our rooted cosmopolitan internationalists. To be rootless, to become rootless, one has to have not only the desire to travel (which I had ever since seeing the enormous world map on our sitting room wall, which made the Soviet Union look even

bigger than it actually was). One also has to have the material means, skills, and/or languages, to enable one to flourish, live or to even survive abroad. Tom Mann (1856-1941), a skilled engineering worker, inter/national union leader, later a Comintern agent/activist, could so travel, not only to English-speaking countries, could be welcomed by a local community of labour, socialist or Communist activists, and find work – engineering or organising. But he was clearly rooted in the UK, to which he returned and where he died.<sup>25</sup>

It may be that I am today, despite our ever more globalised times, talking about those who can afford to be, and have the portable skills to be, rootless. Maybe. But one doesn't have to be Western or Jewish to be such. Consider this on Edward Said, born in Palestine, who lived most of his life in the US, of Christian origin but identified with the struggles of the overwhelmingly Muslim Palestinians and who

Was ... always at a slight tangent to his affinities. In this age of displaced persons he was not even a typical exile, since most men and women forced to leave their country in our time have a place to which they can look back (or forward): a remembered – more often misremembered – homeland that anchors the transported individual or community in time if not in space. Palestinians don't even have this. There never was a formally constituted Palestine. Palestinian identity thus lacks that conventional anterior reference. [...] In consequence, as Said tellingly observed ... "I still have not been able to understand what it means to love a country." That, of course, is the characteristic condition of the rootless cosmopolitan. It is not very comfortable or safe to be without a country to love: It can bring down upon your head the anxious hostility of those for whom such rootlessness suggests a corrosive independence of spirit. But it is liberating: The world you look out upon may not be as reassuring as the vista enjoyed by patriots and nationalists, but you see further. As Said wrote in 1993, "I have no patience with the position that 'we' should only or mainly be concerned with what is 'ours.'" (Judt 2004)

I clearly do not share Said's countrylessness. And have never had to suffer the violent hostility that Said did. I may not love the 'Yookay', but there are many things about it that I certainly do love. I therefore recognise Said as a fellow-spirit in the wide pantheon of rootless cosmopolitans. And hope I am also 'always at a slight angle' to my affinities.

At an academic-cum-activist conference on internationalism in Dublin, 2013, I was reminded that as global solidarity thought and action become more necessary and ever more widespread, they do not actually become simpler. The simpler days were those of national industrial imperialist capitalism, and then that of two or three blocs. And many internationalists still think of solidarity in simple terms – North v. South, West v. Rest, Capital v. Labour, Capitalism v. Socialism. But capitalism has now become not only global (having penetrated and converted Communist China) but infinitely more complex, undermining Manichean oppositions, simple or simplified identities and affinities. And whilst, on the one hand, we can recognise that, 'Capitalism is not in Crisis, Capitalism is the Crisis',<sup>26</sup> capital and empire are also in very considerable disarray. So are those challenging these. And in times of such disarray, people(s) are as likely to turn to re-imagined and exclusionary communities – religious, ethnic, patriarchal, national, authoritarian – as they are to recognise a common and general global condition of alienation and to search for common or compatible alternatives to such. Much of this disarray reveals itself in the area from which Edward Said stemmed. And the Dublin conference showed awareness of the problem that Libya, Syria and Palestine create for principled and effective solidarity activity.

At the conference was a UK-based scholar of Turkish background, Ayça Çubukçu, who spoke on the disarray amongst the anti-imperialist Left internationally, over Libya. She is also involved with a research group on ‘Internationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Solidarity’ at the London School of Economics. The description of the group runs in part as follows:

Given the frequent overlap, in theory and practice, *between* visions of internationalism and cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and the remarkable internal variation – to the extent that two different and coherent bodies of thought can be said to exist in the first place – *within* internationalism and cosmopolitanism on the other, how should we think about the divergences and convergences between these two visions? When different versions of internationalism and cosmopolitanism as expounded and practiced practised by various theological traditions are added to the matrix along with their feminist, anarchist, regionalist, Third-Worldist, nationalist and militarist articulations, the nature of the two-headed monster proves too complicated to grasp in a single breath. *Internationalism, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Solidarity ...* aims to explore the politics of transnational solidarity by addressing the complications that arise in attempts to define, critique, and practice various strands of internationalism and cosmopolitanism.<sup>27</sup>

Whilst recognising that what I have previously called ‘Firstworld Thirdworldism’, is only one axis and one direction of or for internationalism, I obviously welcome this initiative at a moment that so dramatically poses such challenges for it. My own address to the conference ended with a citation from John Holloway on ‘Zapatismo Urbano’. Holloway is clearly interested in drawing, critically, lessons from the Zapatista experience and solidarity with this. Here we are talking again of solidarity on the North-South axis but this time with the flow running in a South-North direction, or actually in both directions; or is this the author actually reflecting on the possible lessons of his ‘Zapatismo Urbano’ for the Zapatistas?

[an]other aspect of the Zapatismo of Chiapas that has found little resonance in the [world’s?] cities is their use of national symbols – the national flag, the ... national anthem. The urban-Zapatista movement tends not to be nationalist and in many cases is profoundly anti-nationalist. It has been not so much an inter-national movement as a global movement, a movement of struggle for which global capitalism and not the nation-state has been the principal point of reference. (Holloway 2013)

Bearing in mind the nationalist/zenophobic/fascist fervours displayed, differentially, not only in cities of the Arab world but also in the Ukraine, South Africa, Catalonia and even in the (previously) laid-back Netherlands, the John Holloway argument looks limited to particular world areas, or movements, or moments, or even to a global future for which we can/must hope ... or work.

## **Hic Sunt Vulpes?**

I understand that ancient map-makers confronted by cold northern territories of which they knew nothing, would write, ‘Hic Sunt Vulpes’ (Here Are Wolves).<sup>28</sup> Cyberia, like Siberia, is far from paradise. It is an ever-expanding universe in which the forces for commerce and control on the one

hand, the commons and emancipation on the other, are involved in a complex and often violent conflict. But Cyberia is surely the privileged space for emancipation that free-thinkers and revolutionaries 1) projected onto the press – or at least the ‘free press’, then 2) with Marx and Engels onto the railways or telegraph, 3) Lenin on cinema, 4) Brecht on radio, and, eventually, 5) Enzensberger on the modern media ... of 1968! Which is why I do tend to repeat the phrase of Manuel Castells about ‘real virtuality’ and those of Mariátegui to the effect that communication is the nervous system of internationalism and solidarity (Waterman 2006, 2008).<sup>29</sup>

I note that in his essay about contemporary internationalism Perry Anderson (2002) says nothing about Cyberia. But, then, he also has nothing to say about *communication in connection with internationalism*. And, for that matter, not *too* much about internationalism itself! Sydney Tarrow (2005:136-8) does allow the internet two or three pages, but then qualifies its value, referring to the internet’s possible subversion of the organisations/institutions seen by him as necessary for effective long-term international campaigning. Both of them, it seems to me, are still enclosed within a world of nation-states, of organisations and institutions. Both use a language – for the ideology (Anderson) or activists (Tarrow) – that makes the nation, nationality, nationalism the point of departure. And, possibly, in both cases, of arrival. Neither, in any case seems to imagine a meaningful community beyond or without the state-defined-nation.

I clearly do. Or, rather, I see multiple possible meaningful and radically-democratic communities, some more local than the nation-state, others indeed *international* (the European Union, various competing or complementary Latin American ones, the Maghreb and/or Mashraq),<sup>30</sup> and yet others of interest, of identity, of ideology for which the nation-state and state-nationalism are either problematic, obstacles to be surpassed or irrelevant. Emancipatory challenges to such state-like entities can also be found.<sup>31</sup>

## **The Oh-Too-Rooted Cosmopolitans**

Tarrow starts his book with the story of his father, Moishke/Morris, an East-European Jewish immigrant to the US of the 1920s, who – like so many small-town emigrants and international immigrants, before and since – transferred remittances for good works to his home place. Later, he was involved in unionism, with rescuing Jews from war-torn Europe, and then in creating a homeland for them in Israel. His father is, for Tarrow, the very model of a ‘rooted cosmopolitan’. My own father, Alek Naszibirski/Alec Waterman,<sup>32</sup> who had a similar background, came, around the same time, to Britain, and became a Communist internationalist (with its then increasingly Russian roots). I mention both because these are recognisable and significant historical types. But whatever their roots and rootedness, we have to note the limits of their cosmopolitanism/ internationalism. In the Moishke/Morris case, the transplanted Jewish settlement was created, with the help of foreign powers, in someone else’s homeland, and has become an increasingly nationalist, militarist and racist state. In the Alek/Alec case his Soviet Jewish Communist friend and comrade, Solomon Mikhoels, was killed and Soviet Jewish cultural life ended by diktat. This was the fate of rooted cosmopolitanism and leftist internationalism in the world of nation states.

Without going further into the writing of either Anderson or Tarrow, I do not actually consider that either ‘cosmopolitanism’ or ‘rootedness’ are of themselves adequate terms for the understanding – and advance – of a radical-democratic global movement of solidarity that I fancy both of them would

actually like to see. Despite its Greek roots, the ‘ism’ was a construction of the European bourgeois and liberal enlightenment. And - to caricature lightly – what it meant was that we would have a world of peace and justice if everyone spoke French, later English/American, but certainly not Mandarin or Quechua. Is ‘cosmopolitanism’ an adequate term for what I have been doing, or believe I have been engaged in, for most of my life. I hope not:

Cosmopolitanism is the western engagement with the rest of the world and that engagement is a colonial one, which simultaneously transcends the national boundaries and is tied to it. Instead of perceiving cosmopolitanism and nationalism as alternatives, one should perhaps recognise them as the poles in a dialectical relationship. (van der Veer 2002:11).

As for ‘rootedness’, it would seem to me that this is also something of a floating signifier,<sup>33</sup> value-empty and ready for capture by marginalised claimants, religious or ethnic fundamentalists, ideological localists, and therefore for application in the most varied and problematic of manners. So I think that rather than qualifying, or joining together, ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘rootedness’, I would still rather see us work out the possible meanings of a *post-nationalist* internationalism – ‘a new global solidarity’. This would be one which surpasses *internationalism* and is free of debts to cosmopolitanism. What we need is to re-imagine solidarity (here, in relation to labour, see Hyman 1999).

With respect to the World Social Forum and the wider global justice and solidarity movement, I have long argued the necessity for a shift of focus – a de-centering - from its place-based events, and in two directions, the cyberspatial and the local (‘local’ here signifying both a locale and the subject-specific). This is because of the danger of either the Forum or the general GJ&SM remaining events or processes in the hands of the university-educated middle classes, requiring long-distance air-travel and hotel accommodation. I have obviously been one of these middle-class nomads/tourists over a decade or more – and am not about to become a Self-Hating Middle-Class Jet-set Leftist (*Sub-Category*: Secular, Jewish, White, Hetero, etc, etc). But I am also in favour of the closest possible articulation of, and feedback between, the cyberspatial on the one hand and the local/specific on the other. Indeed, I believe promoters of the intercontinental WSF events should be required to justify each of these in terms of their functionality to the local/specific in grounded places, and to the universal/cyberspatial that surrounds us. Oh, and also, obviously in terms of climatological and other ecological friendliness.

## Roots in Space?

If Cyberia is an increasingly real virtuality, then I wonder why it should not be possible to have roots (also) *here*. I am *attached* to this space and to such a degree that the idea of losing access to it fills me with the kind of frustration, anxiety and grief that others might feel at having to migrate, or being exiled. I like it here ... *there*? ... wherever cyberspace might conceivably be. Yet, I dedicated my globalisation and solidarity book to four local martyrs of social movements that are today major parts of the GJ&SM. They were: Maria Elena Moyano, popular feminist of Villa El Salvador, Lima, Peru; Chico Mendes of the rural labour and ecological movement in Amazonia, Brazil; Shankar Guha Niyogi, leader of a mineworkers and tribals movement in Dalli-Rajhara, India; and Ken Saro-Wiwa, leader of the minority rights and ecological movement in the Niger Delta (Waterman 1998/2002). I

dedicated the book to them because I thought that with more effective solidarity globally, they might not have been killed. I am not, therefore, proposing the rootless cosmopolitan or the radical-democratic cyberspace communicator as the very model of the twentyfirst century internationalist. I am just asking whether s/he is not one significant type of such. And suggesting there is no necessary contradiction, in a cyberspatial world, between being a somewhat rootless global solidarity activist and the protection, promotion and projection of more local ones.

If this all sounds a little pathetic or apologetic then maybe I need to reconceptualise both rootlessness and cosmopolitanism. Perhaps I have already established that rootlessness does not mean a lack of earthly attachments. In any case, the ability to detach (to rise above, to see beyond) oneself from the parochial, the local, the national, the regional, the bloc, the faith would seem to be a condition for any contemporary universalism with emancipatory pretensions. But that still leaves the enlightenment's – and Stalin's – 'cosmopolitan' in the title of this chapter.

*I have previously argued for a new kind of internationalism, that of communications and culture:*

Like the other alternative social movements operating under the conditions of an informatised and globalised capitalism, that of women is, at least implicitly, a communications internationalism. This has several different but interconnected meanings. The first is that it operates on the terrain of ideas, information and images, revealing that which is globally concealed, suggesting new meanings for that which is revealed. The second and consequent one is that, like other such, it is particularly active and effective on the terrain of communication, media, culture. The third is that, again like other such, its basic relational principle is that of the network rather than the organisation. The fourth, and consequent, one is that the movement needs to be primarily understood in communicational/cultural rather than in the traditional political/organisational terms. (Waterman 2001:215-6)

This implies, at least for me, the possibility of seeing myself as a 'global solidarity communicator' and, hopefully, as one whose taking flight does not – as in the famous painting of [Icarus](#) by Pieter Breughel – take him too close to the sun, nor so far from the ploughman, the herdsman and the fisherman on the earth, that they are unaware of his flight, his fall, or even his existence.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid endless updates I decided to end my autobio with this reflection. It has itself been online here and there and I have updated it once or thrice. I know that it risks repetition. Readers will have to themselves judge whether or not my decision was the right one.

<sup>2</sup> Soil, or at least the failure to work the land, actually entered into Stalin's denial to Soviet Jews the status granted other Soviet nationalities, despite 'Jew' being stamped in their internal passports! This comes out of a systematic critique of Marxism and cosmopolitanism by Gilbert Achcar (2013), particularly in a part chapter on "'Cosmopolitanism" as Anathema: the Stalinist Perversion' (134-44). Stalin's attitude towards those who failed to work the land did not, of course, mean any noticeable privilege for those who did.

<sup>3</sup> 'Imagined Community', addressed to nationalism, is not only one of the most brilliant but of the most popular of contemporary sociological concepts, certainly surviving the numerous critiques of the Benedict Anderson book (e.g. Davidson 2007). The phrase gets some 184,000 hits on Google. It certainly appeals to me in thinking about 'internationalism' in the past and the 'new global solidarity' in the future. More than the 'nation' – as natural to most of its citizens as a football club to its supporters, the stock exchange to its members – does the international have to be *imagined*.

<sup>4</sup> Marx and Engels had, of course, brilliant insights and utopian aspirations. They also profoundly influenced the International Workingmen's Association, or First International. In my book on the new internationalisms, I critique Marx and Engels on the basis of the *Communist Manifesto* and the earlier *German Ideology* (which I found infinitely richer). It was the novelty, dynamism and

cruelty of industrial capitalism and its first globalisation – plus age-old messianism and apocalypticism – that inspired Marx's speculations, hopes and appeals. Also, of course, his own rootless cosmopolitanism (see Waterman 1998:29-42).

<sup>5</sup> More evidence from Google when I last checked. 'Marxism and Nationalism' earned some 80,000 Googles (if we may so name the new currency), 'Marxism and Internationalism', a meagre 20,000. This is, however, 20,000 more references than it gets in the brilliant world-spanning historical survey and critique of Marxisms by Goran Therborn (2008). Whilst, however, the present paper has been on a very low backburner, things have been improving. An academic of Marxist inclination and social-geographic formation has written a pathbreaking work on international solidarity. This is David Featherstone (2012). I much appreciate his concluding notion that solidarity is a world-making process ... and one without guarantees (244-5). For an excellent review of Featherstone, see Aiken (2013).

<sup>6</sup> In 2009, following the world capitalist economic crisis, Hugo Chavez called for the creation of a new socialist international <http://links.org.au/node/1372>. Insofar, however, as this was a state initiative, it seemed to me, from the start, likely to reproduce the problems of previous state and party-dominated internationals. It did not take off on the anointed date due, no doubt, to pressing national(ist) priorities. I nonetheless determined to follow its progress, as well as that of other state-dependent internationalist initiatives (Waterman 2010a). My interest was rewarded when an evidently twentieth century Leninist groupuscule in the UK turned up for the launch of the Umpteenth International in Caracas, only to find that it had not taken the customary leap from imagination to institutionalisation. The over-optimistic delegates were dutifully compensated, becoming also the umpteenth tourists of the umpteenth national revolution.

<sup>8</sup> I have occasionally revisited an old stamping ground (*ground?*), 'international labour communication by computer' (Waterman 1992, Waterman 2010b). I am not sure if I will be doing so again because the wave I might have been riding or even foreseeing in 1992 has become a *tsunami*, overwhelming my always limited technical capacities.

<sup>9</sup> Thus did I discover and order a work on the internationals, previously unknown to me, by the multi-talented Raymond Postgate (1920). Postgate was a founder member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, with which he broke because of its self-subordination to the Moscow-based Third International (Comintern). [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond\\_Postgate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_Postgate).

<sup>10</sup> Such issues have been discussed within the Networked Politics project of the Transnational Institute (TNI), Amsterdam, [http://www.networked-politics.info/?page\\_id=12](http://www.networked-politics.info/?page_id=12). More recently Networked Politics gave birth, or morphed into, NetworkedLabour, <http://www.networkedlabour.net/2013/04/a-networked-debate-on-new-labour/#comment-5>. Whilst fairly cosmopolitan and occasionally rootless in sponsorship and participation, this promising project had not managed, almost one year later, to turn a three-day exchange between some impressively radical cyberspace specialists and political economists into the promised booklet. I was myself somewhat overwhelmed by both the ideas and the terminology, and was feeling the need for diagrams and demonstrations. I later began to wonder whether the seminar formula of cyber-specialists+political economists could add up to an emancipatory labour cyber-communication project. Largely missing from the event were the union or other labour activists with digital capacities and international computer communication experiences. It is to be hoped that such shortcomings (or my imagining of such) will be overcome.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.unionbook.org/profile/peterwaterman>.

<sup>12</sup> July-August, 2014, this judgement requires qualification. Eric Lee is the best-known Israeli propagandist in the international labour movement, although he has been increasingly obliged to keep his Zionism off both UnionBook and LabourStart. At the height of Israel's worst ever assault on the people of Gaza, I had posted an item on UBook which he found both 'offensive' and 'libelous'. He therefore suspended me (with no such five minute warning as the Israelis were claiming to provide Gazans before destroying their homes). There followed some negotiation, during which I said I would consider withdrawing the offensive item and he informed me he had destroyed it! After I reported the affair to 20-30 relevant networks and individuals, Eric reinstated me on UBook. I will continue to use it until a better such site appears or Eric suspends me again.

<sup>13</sup> <https://on.usilive.org/>. That this is not a one-off is suggested by other innovatory labour communications projects, such as <http://www.scoop.it/t/networked-labour>. This relevant and attractive site was created by Netherlands-based activist, Orsan Senalp, who also coordinated the NetworkedLabour event mentioned in footnote 10. Orsan and his Turkey-based brother have also been reflecting upon the latest technologies and their implications for overcoming the old divide between movement elites and followers, and of the new possibility of 'hacking the general intellect to unchain the collective worker' (Senalp and Senalp 2014). The paper makes multiple references to experiences of international labour networking, but I am not convinced it bridges the gap between an extensive database of cases and a hopefully cyber-empowered labour movement. Nor that it applies its conceptual armoury, as is surely required, to the varied projects it lists. I look forward to the development of this draft.

- 14 <https://usilive.org/every-social-network-has-an-ideology/>.
- 15 When Googled, I found several references to this, including one mentioning my good self. I do not remember making such a proposal but, in any case, I have done nothing to turn it into a real virtuality. I also, however, found this site had been launched, <http://www.labourleaks.org/>. I await further developments.
- 16 See <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications>
- 17 <http://www.democraciaglobal.org/>. Democracia Global, however, has frequently print-published books in Lima that have been previously published elsewhere in Latin America. Maybe the authors gave permission, maybe copyright is more limited or laxer in the sub-continent.
- 18 As mentioned in the preface to this work, in 2012 I turned down a contract with a respected academic publisher for this autobiography. My reasons were 1) that he/she/it wanted some 2,000 Euros from me, thus blurring somewhat the traditional distinction between the academic and the vanity publication, 2) that as an alternative to such a naked subsidy, I would guarantee to purchase X copies at XX Euros and then have to myself publicise, mail and bill for these, 3) that each photo I wanted in it would cost me some 50 Euros, 4) that the book would be published at a price of maybe 70 Euros, putting it out of reach of the kind of reader I was interested in. As a result I created for myself the problem of online publishing in e-book or print-on-demand format, or both, and formatting in either one or two required styles.
- 19 *Recovering Internationalism: Creating the New Global Solidarity* (<http://blog.choike.org/eng/anlysis/113>, in 2008, and *Labour and Social Movements Under/Against a Globalised and Computerised Capitalism* (<http://blog.choike.org/eng/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/isswpcollecupdated1.pdf>) in 2009. Related papers and compilations are available on the German labour network of Dave Hollis and friends, Netzwerk-IT <http://www.netzwerkit.de/projekte/waterman>. More recently, I have been (re)publishing with <http://www.into-ebooks.com/search/>.
- 20 Creative Commons, (<http://creativecommons.org/>). The cost and complexity of *not* so doing is revealed, strangely enough, in a Wikipedia entry entitled ‘Commons: Copyright’ [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Copyright\\_tags](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Copyright_tags). Nothing common about these, of course. More to do with common-or-garden industrial capitalism and the nation state.
- 21 Called, unsurprisingly, *Global Labour Journal*, <http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/globallabour/>, this first appeared in 2009.
- 22 Interface <http://www.interfacejournal.net/>. I thought it should actually be called *InYerFace*.
- 23 Given this was a ‘paste, print and post’ publication, NILS has not (yet?) entered the Promised Land of Cyberia. There may be a set, as there is relevant correspondence about, NILS in the archives I donated to the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, <http://www.iisg.nl/archives/en/files/w/ARCH02586full.php#N1010F>. If not, the IISH has a collection of NILS, probably complete, <http://search.socialhistory.org/Record/1395148>.
- 24 So far issues of the journal have appeared on suitably twentyfirst century issues such as: movement knowledge, on the relationship between civil society and social movements, on crisis and revolutionary transformations, on movements and alternative media, on repression, on feminism and women’s movements, on the Arab Spring, on new struggles around work and on anticolonial and postcolonial movements.
- 25 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom\\_Mann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Mann).
- 26 <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/capitalism-is-the-crisis/>.
- 27 <http://www.lse.ac.uk/humanRights/research/groups/Solidarity.aspx>.
- 28 I can’t find the phrase with Google. Yet I surely cannot have invented it. After all, I gave up Latin after one miserable year at the age of 11. If, however, one searches for its African equivalent, one can find this reference, admittedly coming from a somewhat dubious source:
- “Here be lions.” This is what ancient ... cartographers used to write on maps over unexplored territories, implying that unknown dangers could lie there. If “cyberspace” were a real location appearing on geographical maps and not just a virtual domain, we would probably read that expression over it. [http://www.mpil.de/shared/data/pdf/pdfmpunyb/03\\_roscini\\_14.pdf](http://www.mpil.de/shared/data/pdf/pdfmpunyb/03_roscini_14.pdf).

P.S. It is a 'real location', if evidently one still unfamiliar to many.

<sup>29</sup> The debate about (computerised) communication and social emancipation continues energetically on the Left. Castells (2012) argues for its centrality to the post-2010 wave of social protest, but sees this wave primarily in terms of democracy, in its common or garden political sense. On the other hand – at the other extreme – we can find Martin Upchurch (2014) dismissing Castells and reasserting the priority of the workplace, the union and even the vanguard party! But whilst Castells is obviously much more sensitive to the latest social movements and their articulation with the latest communication technologies, he does not question *capitalism*. The hypothetical opposition here between the workplace and cyberspace is surpassed by those on the emancipatory Left, discussing the newest products and processes, the new kinds of work, of workplace (workspace?), of worker, and seeing cyberspace as an increasingly disputed and disputable terrain. A single case or aspect: Michel Bauwens (2014a) discusses the ambiguities for labour and the labour movement of the 'CopyLeft' or General Public Licence (GPL) and argues for the Peer Production Licence (PPL) to the effect that it

is an example of the Copyfarleft type of license, in which only other commoners, cooperatives and nonprofits can share and re-use the material, but not commercial entities intent on making profit through the commons without explicit reciprocity', [http://p2pfoundation.net/Peer\\_Production\\_License](http://p2pfoundation.net/Peer_Production_License).

Bauwens sparked a considerable debate with some arguing the opposite case. The matter remains unsettled in my mind. But I welcome *new* controversies on the left. Maybe we can now put to bed those arguments on whether the revolution would have remained unbetrayed if Stalin had been Trotsky. (There are, of course, tens, if not hundreds of other quite barren debates pre-occupying the theologically-inclined Lefts).

<sup>30</sup> The Maghreb is the Arab countries of North Africa, the Mashraq those of the Eastern Mediterranean and Iraq. I only learned of the second name as a result of an International Council meeting of the WSF, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> At least in the case of Europe, where previously the only challenges from the Left have been either to improve it or abandon it. See here, <http://beyondeurope.net/>.

<sup>32</sup> In between these two names, he was (as I might have mentioned earlier) Alec Wasserman, a surname adopted from another branch of the family. Why 'Wasserman' when he was an illegal migrant in Britain, rather than Germany, has to remain a mystery. I was born a Wasserman but was secretly (and guiltily) happy to have a new English name when, aged 19, I went to work for the international Communist movement in Prague, 1955. *Update April 2014*: just as I was about to send this to my publisher (virtual), I received from Bertram Zaagsma, a Dutch researcher on Jewish Communism, a file on my father from the archive of the CPGB. This contains a dozen or more documents, providing a far more extensive biography of him than I have previously had access to. One of these was the major eulogy at Alec's funeral. This was given by Alf Holland, a childhood friend of his from Poland. I remember Alf's tearful oration but not, of course, its content. Apart from all the other fascinating information about Alec's life, this reminds me that Alec's original first name was (in Alf's Romanised Yiddish rendering), Zalmelle. In any update of this book I will have to work this material in.

<sup>33</sup> For floating signifiers, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Floating\\_signifier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Floating_signifier).

<sup>34</sup> This painting was up in my school library in the early-1950s, with Gauguin's 'Sunflowers' on another wall. It deserves more careful examination than I gave it at that time. Have a little look here: 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus'. This has to be the most beautiful ironic painting ever. Or do I mean the most ironic beautiful one?

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Peter Waterman's book is for the general reader interested in contemporary history, for activists involved in social movements internationally, for university students and staff concerned with the international socialist, labour and trade union movements - and for those interested in the auto/biographical form for communicating social movement experience.



*Peter Waterman, aged 65, addresses a conference on the International Confederation of Trade Unions, Belgium, 2001.*

'This is an admirable memoir of an intellectual-activist who has lived most intensely the progressive struggles of the last sixty years of world history. Yes, world history, because despite being born in Europe, Peter, in the best tradition of communist internationalism, participated in struggles and movements, not only in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in Africa and most recently in Latin America. But this is much more than a memoir. It is so well documented that, in this personal experience, there are reflected some of the most decisive events of contemporary history. It is a living history book. But even more than this, this book is so clearly and vividly written that at times it reads like the script for an imaginary documentary of our times. This book should be read by all concerned with our recent history in order to get a much more complex inside view of what happened while it was happening. In particular it should be read by the youth in order to get a close-up of the difficulties and possibilities in building another possible world at a time where there existed a vibrant international communist movement. It is up to such youth to evaluate whether difficulties are now less or more daunting, the possibilities less or more luminous.'

*(Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Professor of Sociology, University of Coimbra, Portugal, attached to several other universities internationally, has published widely and in several languages, on law, global social emancipation and the World Social Forum).*