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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines

Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: review_editor@platypus1917.org. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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The Platypus Review

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1 The most revolutionary weapon

An interview with Nelson Peery

Edward Remus with Greg Gabrellas

2 The crisis in Greece and the prospects for the Left

Periklis Pavlidis

became a hindertand.

At the beginning of the Civil War, the South was twenty per cent richer than the North, and richer in culture too. After the Civil War, the South was progressively reduced to a backwater, whether we're talking about education, healthcare, or housing. This colonial situation was exacerbated by the color question. The race question was used to hold the entire area down. There's nothing new about instigating tribes to fight one another, having different peoples of the same nation or of the same geographic area—in this case, the Black Belt—right one another to the benefit of an invader. The Indians conquered India for the British, the Africans conquered Africa for the British and the French, the Vietnamese conquered Vietnam for the French, etc. In America it was the race question that was pervasive. Chattel slavery had reduced human beings to the level of property, such that trying to integrate freed blacks into American society was very, very difficult. A culture of a hundred years had to be overcome. The situation of the black didn't allow anything to move. The poorest white people were in the Black Belt too. This made it an area with the greatest possible return on investment, much like Brazil and the Congo. By the end of Reconstruction that area was a secure domain for Wall Street. Three-fifths of the plantations in the Black Belt were owned by Wall Street corporations, especially by United States Steel. They had Southern whites run them but these corporations owned them. However, it was easier to deal with the superficial features of the problem rather than look at the fundamental characteristics—namely, imperialism, the investment of finance capital.

I was a bricklayer when bricklayers in Chicago got twice the rate of the bricklayers in Birmingham, Alabama. It was a given that we didn't organize the South—"We will let you organize Chicago provided you stay out of Birmingham." I didn't consider the entire South to be a developing nation but I did consider the Black Belt one. And most parts of the Black Belt were either very heavily or completely African-American.

Peery was active in revolutionary politics for 76 years until his death on September 6, 2015. Politicized in the Communist Party, USA (CP) and later its Left Caucus, Peery left the CP in the 1950s on anti-revisionist grounds to form the Provisional Organizing Committee to Reconstitute a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (POC). Expelled from the POC in the wake of the 1965 Watts rebellion, Peery helped to found the California Communist League and played a leading role in this tendency's subsequent formations: the Communist League, the Communist Labor Party, and the extant League of Revolutionaries for a New America. Peery's death prompted members of the Platypus Affiliated Society to recover and transcribe the recordings of two interviews conducted some years earlier. The first interview, conducted by Greg Gabelas and Edward Remus on September 13, 2011, was broadcast live on the Chicago-extended radio station WHPK 88.5 FM. Remus conducted an extended follow-up interview in Peery's home on March 9, 2012. What follows is a compiled and edited transcript of these conversations.

Edward Remus: Since the founding of the American Communist Party and John Reed's report to the Second Congress of the Communist International, Marxist thinkers in America have tasked themselves with understanding the implications of race and racism for revolutionary politics. How has your thinking on this question changed over time?

Nelson Peery: The question of race in America has changed along with the changing economy. The modern period of the race question in America started with the destruction of Reconstruction after the Civil War. The role of the individual in history is very important. If Lincoln had lived, they would have perhaps solved the problem to a great extent within four or five years of Reconstruction. They murdered Lincoln because he was willing to give the right to vote to black veterans and to literate blacks. When Johnson took over as president it took another hundred years to achieve what Lincoln could have achieved in about five years. But what was the foundation of Reconstruction after Lincoln? It was based on using the results of the Civil War—"waving the bloody shirt," so to speak—in order to galvanize

Edward Remus with Greg Gabrellas

An interview with Nelson Peery

The most revolutionary weapon

Weapon, continued from page 1

and tenacity of the African-American people, against all odds, to stand up, fight, and suffer the way they did—these are admirable things. But the real motive force was the mechanization of Southern agriculture, driving the blacks off the farm and into the smaller towns, and from there into the major northern cities. This made it absolutely inevitable that blacks would finally win that freedom. Marx points out in *Capital*, correctly, that you can’t free serfs without replacing them with more productive equipment. The freedom movement was only the political and social expression of the economic revolution that had taken place. Don’t treat it as a subjective question, although it’s expressed subjectively. It’s an objective process!

Tactically, every thinking revolutionary understood that the battle wasn’t over whether or not you were going to support the freedom movement but rather over which wing you were going to support. Were you going to support the black petit-bourgeoisie and their backers? Or were you going to support the emergence—they didn’t get very far—of certain black working-class and lower-middle-class groupings that had a much different view from the right wing [that was supported by the government]? It was a question of how we were going to work with them and what we wanted to get out of it. You have to work with objective reality, but you have to have a program and it can’t be a subjective program. The program had to be based upon the objective, motive forces behind the freedom movement. And the freedom movement was the inevitable prelude to some unity of the American working class. I’m afraid it might come too late. The result is a black president who is probably going to bring a fascist America into being. Is that what we fought for?

GG: Given this trajectory of the movement for black liberation since the middle-to-late 20th century, how have developments within so-called “black politics” prompted you to reinvestigate or reconsider the problem of race and revolution over the years?

NP: Developments have only confirmed my perspective. If it’s essentially a national question and not a race question then we can expect the development of a national bourgeoisie that is going to be co-opted by the bourgeoisie of the imperial country. This happened in Angola, Algeria, Vietnam, everywhere. Given the development in the United States it was absolutely imperative that an upper stratum of blacks be created and that they be integrated into the bourgeoisie. I wasn’t disillusioned at all by the development of a Colin Powell or a Barack Obama or of black millionaires; these have only confirmed my perspective. Are the black masses any better off than they were before? In Chicago, sixty per cent are unemployed, their brains and bodies wasted. The black bourgeoisie is much better off, but not the black working class. In fact, we’ve lost one of the most precious things we had: our dignity as being “Negro.” We stuck together and we felt responsible for one another. We’ve even lost that.

GG: Granted that the Civil Rights Movement has led us where we are today, in which a small black bourgeoisie is able to make use of the privileges hard won through struggle while leaving behind the majority of blacks in a state of social desperation, a strain of black nationalist thought nevertheless remains more or less univocal in arguing that racism remains *the* problem of America. How has racism changed over the decades since the Civil Rights movement?

NP: What is racism? Is it cultural? Is it political? We have to come to the conclusion that racism is a political question. When I was a youngster, we were taught there were a number of different races. The Mediterranean race of Spanish, Italians, Greeks, and so forth was considered much inferior to the Nordic peoples. Another form of racism in America evolved out of slavery. The point is that they can manipulate this term “racism” any way they need in order to reinforce the economic situation. Right now, we’re seeing a merging of the “trailer trash” and the “ghetto” blacks and the black bourgeoisie goes right along with it. It isn’t as if the black bourgeoisie isn’t just as racist as the white bourgeoisie. What does the black bourgeoisie do for the black worker today? They get as far away from them as possible! Jesse Jackson summed it up when he said that there’s nothing more terrifying than to be approached by three black youth.

ER: In 1974 the Black Workers Congress wrote a polemic against the Communist League, accusing you, among other things, of “having reached the social-fascist level of recently spreading the imperialist-racist line that the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nationalities is the main danger within the U.S. Communist movement today.” This polemic emerged out of the competition between anti-revisionist Marxist groups for the membership of workers and students. Many groups followed a strategy of theory, unity, and fusion: develop the correct theoretical line, unite revolutionaries behind this line, and then “fuse” these revolutionaries with working people in factories, neighborhoods, and communities of color. What do you make of this criticism of your tendency’s line as “social-fascist” and “imperialist-racist”?

NP: The black bourgeoisie had to gain hegemony over the black movement in order to accomplish their economic goals and they had to do so on the basis of black nationalism. How else were they going to unite the disparate goals of the black bourgeoisie and the black worker? The black worker’s tendency is to unite with whatever workers are in the plant. The black bourgeoisie’s tendency is to separate the workers in order to gain some kind of foothold in American capitalism. So, yes, I think the black bourgeoisie was and is the most dangerous element as far as the black worker is concerned. The welfare of the black bourgeoisie depends on the destitution and poverty of the black worker. If the black worker became integrated in America then what would the black bourgeoisie stand on? They couldn’t continue to exist.

Most of the contradictions that arose between our

group and the other anti-revisionist groups turned on whether or not the goal of the black workers was to fully integrate themselves into the American working class. Of course, they *were* a part of the working class. I never believed in this “white working class, black working class” business. They were all one working class. But black workers were isolated and subject to segregation. The black bourgeoisie had to maintain that isolation, that poverty of the black masses, as the foundation of their upward development.

The so-called Black Workers Congress was really the black petit-bourgeois congress! They all became professors and small businessmen. What happened to the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, or to the Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement, which was the foundation of this thing? They’re all unemployed, living in Detroit on handouts now. The black worker is still the black worker and the black bourgeoisie is still the black bourgeoisie.

ER: Reading Max Elbaum’s *Revolution in the Air* (2006) or Mike Staudenmaier’s *Truth and Revolution: A History of the Sojourner Truth Organization, 1969-1986* (2012), it becomes clear that various tendencies within the New Communist Movement took up theoretical lines that emphasized black particularity and white privilege. Such theoretical commitments remain widespread among avowedly anti-racist activists and academics on the Left despite critiques of this approach by Adolph Reed and others. What, in your view, was the political result of the lines on race and racism developed within the New Communist Movement? Do you see the widespread emphasis on black particularity as a retreat, politically, from the universalism of the earlier Civil Rights Movement?

NP: I’m quite sure that if the proletarian elements of the African-American movement had been in control there would have been a different kind of political expression. It was petit-bourgeois all the way down, from top to bottom. Exclusiveness is an aspect of petit-bourgeois politics. Just as the British bourgeoisie had to fence off their market in order to develop, so the black bourgeoisie also had to fence off theirs. They had to use the motion of the black masses as their marketplace in order to get these concessions. Look at Jesse Jackson!

Black nationalism was the class movement of the black petit-bourgeoisie against the natural instincts of the worker. When Stokely Carmichael came to the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party with his black nationalism, Fannie Lou Hamer fought like hell for an integrated movement and finally had to resign from SNCC. The Stokely Carmichaels split the movement and by splitting the movement they were able to defeat us. They couldn’t defeat us while we were united and organically connected to the white liberal intelligentsia and to the few workers who supported us. It’s just like a military maneuver: You split the enemy, destroy this section, then destroy that section. That’s what Stokely Carmichael did. This move toward nationalism was first of all in the interests of a black bourgeoisie but it was also indispensable to containing the entire movement. The worst part of it was that the white radicals supported the black nationalists.

ER: Many white radicals embraced separatist approaches to revolutionary organization—and, perhaps relatedly, embraced theories of racial particularity, inter-group oppression, and interpersonal privilege—out of a sense that it would be impossible for an integrated movement to overcome the racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice that manifested within many New Left organizations. You seem to have built a racially- and gender-integrated organization without adopting theories of racial particularism or interpersonal privilege. To many on the Left today this would seem to be an impossible feat. How has your organization approached internal conflicts over identity and privilege while maintaining this sharp line against black nationalism?

NP: What makes a leader capable of a contribution is that they just happen to have the characteristics needed at a particular time. When I was fifteen years old, I was walking with my father past a guy in the doorway of a tavern, drunk on a Sunday morning. I said, “That’s disgusting.” My dad said, “No! He’s a military genius, there just isn’t any war.” I grew up in Wabasha, Minnesota. Of 1,800 people we were the only black family. Black nationalism never hit a chord with me. I had too many white friends with high moral standards who were ready to die for their beliefs—and these beliefs included real democracy. I was eighteen when I went into the war and twenty-four when I came out. I went to a university for two years on the G.I. Bill of Rights but I finally decided to quit college and become a professional revolutionary. I soon learned that being a professional revolutionary is the same as being a professor or doctor. You have to practice with people who know what they’re doing. Amongst my comrades were people like Joe Dougher and Admiral Kilpatrick, a black worker who taught at the Lenin Institute. Kilpatrick was the political liaison between the Lincoln Battalion and the Fifteenth Brigade, which was the international brigade. These were Communists who spent their lives in combat and trade-union organization. Nobody could hand me this crap about black nationalism.

From the time we established our organization we were debating the question of women. As early as the 1960s, it was clear that the growth of women in the working class meant that they were destined to play a big role in the revolutionary movement. We had to start that training immediately, but we faced the same problem with women that we faced with blacks. We could elect them to office when they were prepared to carry out their duties but that would never happen on its own. So, I finally got a rule passed to the convention that fifty-one per cent of our leaders had to be women. This solved the problem. At the heyday of the Communist Labor Party, we were one third Latino, one third black, one third white, and fifty-one per cent women. Even Elbaum gives us credit for that, writing in a sentence or two that perhaps we were the only organization in the history of the revolutionary movement in America in which minorities and women constituted the majority of the leadership. Fifty-one per cent had to be women and



Meeting of the Second National Negro Congress (NNC), Philadelphia on October 15, 1937. The backdrop banners include Lincoln, John Brown, Richard Allen and Frederick Douglass. The NNC was created in 1935 at Howard University with the goal of uniting black and white workers and intellectuals to pressure the New Deal administration for labor and civil rights. It was affiliated with the Communist Party.

fifty-one per cent had to be a national minority. It was a question of doing it, not a question of theorizing about it. But they’re not capable when you get them, just like nobody is. You’ve got to train them, criticize them, give them history, and insist that they read books.

A gang of black intellectuals has come through our organization. None of them stayed because nobody kow-towed to them. If you don’t submit yourself to the authority of democratic centralism then you can’t stay here. We’ve lost people with great potential who couldn’t get rid of their bourgeois side. They wanted privilege and didn’t get it here. We have a lot of smart black people, but they’re all workers – people like General Baker, the chair of our organization, who formed the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit.

GG: Based on the political orientation and internal structure you’ve outlined so far, when you formed the Communist Labor Party in 1974 and backed away from inter-group polemics with other New Communist Movement tendencies in order to concentrate on organizing the working class, what obstacles and challenges did you encounter? How do you account for the failure of the Communist Labor Party to organize the working class beyond a certain point?

NP: By that point it was clear that the struggle against revisionism in the Soviet Union had been lost. What lay before us, then, was the question of how to go about the struggle under existing conditions. The Communist Labor Party set about the task of what we call “teaching as we fight,” of putting the question of communism in the context of the history of the American people and of the American social order, not in the Russian or Chinese context.

A new class of people has developed in America by robotics and electronics. More and more people are being thrown out of bourgeois society or are just barely clinging on to it by their fingernails. The Europeans call it a “precarariat,” and we call it a “new class.” For the first time, we’re seeing the development of machinery that is making capitalism impossible. The private ownership of the socially-necessary means of production is becoming impossible. But the communist class is ideologically anti-communist. So the role of any revolutionary party today is first of all in the intellectual field. I don’t mean “high intellectualism.” I mean the introduction of ideas that reflect the reality of the new economic situation in America.

GG: Much of the innovative theoretical work that came out of the CLP during the 1970s anticipated the increasing role of science and technology in transforming the character of the working class, in making it harder and harder for workers to organize and for working-class politics to play a leading role in transforming and improving society. What was the role and effectiveness of your intellectual grasp of these wide-ranging social transformations—what was the payoff, to use a very vulgar term, of your theoretical work—if you were still unable to make the most of the historical development that brought us where we are today?

NP: What is the revolutionary process? Essentially, it’s that the spontaneous development of the means of production—the economic revolution—produces a social revolution, creates a crisis. It begins with the destruction of the existing society. We’ve been in that situation for twenty or thirty years now. We’re seeing the destruction of one social order by the economic revolution. The contradiction between the old social order and the new economic order is eventually going to bring about a political revolution. That political stage is only a small part of the revolutionary process. The revolutionary process itself is a social revolution. So, under these conditions, any revolutionary who deals simply with the working class is not being serious. The working class is over with. You have to deal with *society*, with the social upheaval developing in America.

ER: What are the political implications of your concept of a “new class”?

NP: Any dictionary will tell you that a political party is a subjective expression of an objective process in society. In *Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution* we pointed out that the critical weakness of the world communist movement up to this point is that there have been communist parties (and they have had the ideology of Marxism) but there has never been an actual communist movement that these parties can represent. The Democratic and Republican parties weather these storms because they represent an actual motion in society—that is, the capitalist system is *real*, and they represent that! There’s a class in society that is capitalist! There has never been a socialist or a communist class—up until this point—because there has never been machinery, means of production, that will

allow for the creation of that class.

We can mark the evolution of capital with the development of manufacturing. When manufacturing reached a certain point, capital became possible. Someone came up with the idea that instead of buying a person and enslaving him for life he would get much more out of him with the wage system. There was a practical motion towards the evolution of capital *before* there was a political movement for capital. The political movement sprang out of the practical movement. That is not true with the communist movement. In Russia, Stalin and Lenin wrote over and over again about the Russian proletariat being the most revolutionary in the world—but they never called that working class “communist” because they could not be.

Today we’re faced with machinery—productive equipment—that does not require human labor anymore. It’s accelerating. We’re looking at the practical possibility, within my lifetime perhaps, of the majority of labor (and a lot of intellectual labor) being done away with by electronics. How are people going to eat if one section of society owns the productive processes and the other side has nothing to sell? The only way that the majority of people can survive is if these marvelous means of production belong to society, the resources of society are distributed by need, and the individual contributes to society whatever he or she is capable of. We see the possibility of an actual communist class developing for the first time in world history. A different kind of communist party has to represent that. Every communist party in the past has been based on ideology. The communist party that must evolve out of this practical situation has to be *political*, not ideological—not that ideology doesn’t play a role, of course it does! But the salient task of the party is going to be the pathbreaking and practical development of the communist society. In the same way, the task of the Republican Party was to break open the path for the practical development of modern industry based on the steam engine.

ER: It seems that much of your work, especially coming out of the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, suggested that capitalist society has never yet been “ripe” for communism and that any revolution seeking communism has been “premature.” I want to play devil’s advocate. Lenin might have thought that if a revolution had succeeded in his lifetime in Germany, England, or the United States, then conditions might have been made ripe for communism fairly quickly. Likewise, Trotsky wrote in the late 1930s that “All talk to the effect that historical conditions have not yet ‘ripened’ for socialism is the product of ignorance or conscious deception. The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only ‘ripened’; they have begun to get somewhat rotten.” This was during the Great Depression, a period of mass unemployment that many associated with labor-saving advances in production. This would seem to signal that the “objective conditions” were ripe for socialism by the beginning of the 20th century, if not earlier, and that socialism did not fail on account of insufficient productive forces.

NP: No matter how bad the situation was in the U.S., the reality was that about two-thirds of the world—Asia, Africa, Latin America—was still ripe for expansion within the capitalist system. But they had to get rid of the closed colonial system. Looking back, the war against Hitler was essentially a war against this closed colonial system. It was a war against England, against France, against Germany, against all of the colonial forces. Hitler was only the worst of them. The Second World War was about whether global finance capital or global industrial capital would be in control. Japan, Germany, etc., represented the past. Roosevelt represented the future. Today we’re seeing the completion of the capitalist consolidation of the world. This is a dangerous thing to say, but I don’t think there’s anywhere for capital to expand.

ER: Are we really reaching the limits of capitalist expansion today? Jobs are still being automated across the world—in the U.S. alone, tens of millions of jobs stand ready to be automated based on current or near-future technologies—while people continue to be proletarianized across the world. But it’s easy for us to imagine that the slum conditions of much of humanity will simply persist and expand as these processes occur, leading to more of the same and worse. What would it mean to complete the social revolution?

NP: One of the most important elements in dialectics is the relationship between quantitative development and qualitative change. If you don’t have a nodal line or nodal point—a point where quality changes—then everything

Weapon, continued from page 3

becomes quantitative. In *Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution* I was trying to say that, since capitalism is based on wage labor and the intensification of the labor process, it is in the interest of the capitalist system to constantly improve the means of production, to make wage labor more productive. But the nodal line is reached when machinery *replaces* wage labor rather than *assists* labor! The whole thing is headed for collapse. Revolution isn't one act; it's a whole epoch. It's not an uprising but a process of economic revolution to political revolution to social revolution to the end of the social revolution through reconstruction.

The Communist Party USA usually thinks it's better to ignore us but every now and then they'll take a whack at us. They insist that electronics is nothing but another quantitative stage of development of capitalist industry. Our position is that a device that replaces the worker is qualitatively different from a device that assists the worker. It's not a question of ideology, of what I think. It's a question of objective reality.

ER: Wal-Mart has developed one of the most advanced automated distribution systems that the world has ever known. It's almost the sort of distribution system that some were hoping would emerge out of the Soviet Union (as opposed to the more bureaucratic distribution system that did in fact exist under 20th-century socialism). Yet much of the U.S. left fails to recognize how much emancipatory potential there is in such technologies. Of course, in order to tap this emancipatory potential, we would need to organize society very differently.

NP: I'm with Marx on this: we rejoice with every single technological advance because it makes the revolution more inevitable and brings it closer. Just imagine the paradise we can create!

ER: Your approach to the societal implications of recent technological changes seems somewhat similar to that of the futurist author Alvin Toffler. When I first encountered Toffler's work I had no idea that he had a background in the CP. Have you engaged Toffler's thinking?

NP: I was in the same club with Al for about a year and a half in Cleveland! We were friends and comrades. When the Party made the call for as many people as possible to quit school and work in industry to re-establish the Party's base in industry, Al and Heidi Toffler left lucrative and important positions to work in steel mills. This was around 1949-51. By 1951 it was clear that Al had serious differences with the CP. Then he got drafted and went to Korea. When he came out he never got back in touch with the movement. At that period of time the Party was beginning to fall apart. A lot of people were striking out for themselves. Al began writing for some futurist groupings. Then he came out with his first big book, *Future Shock. The Third Wave* was of great importance. I have my differences with the "third wave"—we're not dealing with the third wave, but with something on par with the conquest of fire, a whole new epoch of human history—but when Al wrote *The Third Wave* it was way ahead of the thinking of most people.

ER: Do you consider Toffler a Marxist?

NP: Al utilizes some aspects of Marxism but I'm not sure that I would call him a Marxist. *Third Wave* is no contribution to the revolutionary movement; it's a disorientation. Given Al's intellectual development, he could have been another Karl Marx, but he chose not to be.

ER: In *Black Radical*, you describe how "The sense of loyalty and the desperate need for unity was easily transposed into weapons that intellectually deadened and threatened to destroy the Party." Considering the trajectory of ex-Communist intellectuals such as Toffler, how chiefly would you rank this intellectual death among the causes of the Party's failure?

NP: I want to make a distinction between Communists and those who struggled alongside Communists. During the Spanish Civil War, for example, a large number of intellectuals joined the Lincoln Brigades to fight against fascism in Spain. They weren't fighting for communism, they were fighting against fascism—but they could only do so under the leadership of the Communists because no one else was leading that fight. I could name hundreds of similar examples. The singer and actor Burl Ives summed it up when testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee. They asked, "Why did you sing in front of the Communists?" and he replied, "because nobody else would listen to me!" The Communist Party opened the doors for thousands of cultural workers, especially among minorities and the black cultural intelligentsia. Later on a lot of them became anti-Communist because they knew where their bread was buttered.

GG: The 1930s are often seen as a high-water mark for politics on the Left: sit-down strikes, homeless people's demonstrations, the Popular Front, the New Deal, and the hegemony of the Communist Party in social and artistic movements. But if the Party was in dire straits by the 1950s, how was this crisis already manifest in the 1930s? Was the 1930s both a high point of the Left *and* a period of profound Communist Party mis-leadership?

NP: The rise of fascism was the most dangerous thing at that time, not only to the Soviet Union and Communism but to the common people of the world. The Third International was correct in taking the position that everything had to be subordinated to the destruction of fascism, that we couldn't achieve anything until fascism was destroyed. But the American

party applied this very mechanically. Earl Browder, the chair of the CP, was imprisoned for a petty violation of his passport. Roosevelt pardoned him, took him out of prison, and had dinner with him. When Browder left the White House, Roosevelt had the Communist Party in his hip pocket and that meant Roosevelt had the left wing of the CIO, and everything that was influenced by it, in his hip pocket. The Communist Party dropped a good number of things they should not have dropped in order to remain a hidden but very influential sector of the Roosevelt coalition.

But it's intellectually dishonest to condemn people fifty years later for things which they had very little choice. The CP was under *intense* pressure; the anti-Communist violence in the United States during the 1930s was very serious. People were being lynched for being labor organizers. There was a role for the CP and it played that role. The CP put up fronts, organizations like the Civil Rights Congress, itself made out of five other civil rights groups. The Scottsboro Boys, Angelo Herndon, Rosie Ingram—the CP stood at the forefront of these struggles. Practically all of the slogans of the Civil Rights Movement, and many of the goals, originated with the Communist Party. But they had the wrong conception of the "Negro question" and they therefore came to the wrong conclusions about how to approach it.

GG: Yet many who were in or near the Party and who later played a role in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, including people like Bayard Rustin, Ella Baker, and even Richard Wright, became anti-Communists, suggesting that there was something about the politics of Marxism in 1930s America which, while heroic in its fight to combat the fascists, ultimately led to a broader depoliticization. What accounts for this ambiguity within Communist politics in the 1930s—that it was both the highest expression of American Marxism, but also the turning point against which American reaction still stands victorious?

NP: The high point of the CP's influence was really during the war. Certain doors were opened because of the alliance with the Soviet Union against Hitler; the pressure against the CP was eased off to some extent. But during this period, the CP began losing its working-class base. The Party was inundated with a petty-bourgeois strata, especially the cultural intelligentsia. Later on the United States government simply bought them off. The CIA put out a book entitled *The God That Failed* full of ex-Communist writers who were paid immensely to take this position. Richard Wright is a good example. During the 1950s it was *murder*—you couldn't earn a living! If you were a professor, for example, they told you, "Either you're going to sign this anti-Communist oath or you're not going to keep your job." The same applied in the labor movement. The CP had control of 11 or 12 international unions, but the labor leaders were told, "If you intend to use the Labor Relations Board for negotiations, you're going to have to sign the anti-Communist oath," and they had to take that position against the Party. Doing so, they had to justify it, and the justification was generally rotten.

Now, there were some people who had some genuine gripes against the Party. My differences with the Party were based on internal legality. As the pressure against the Party increased, it became necessary for decisions to be made by a very small group of people, on-the-spot more or less. This tendency to have people not responsible by law to the apparatus arose out of necessity and finally ended up destroying the Party. It was expressed by the ability to throw people with whom you disagreed out of the organization. But I was not like the intellectual Howard Fast who claimed, "Stalin fooled me." Stalin didn't fool me! Whatever I did, I did with a clean conscience. This idea that somehow the Russians brainwashed them and Stalin lied to them is nonsense.

ER: On what basis *did* you criticize the Party in the 1950s? What made you decide to leave?

NP: The critical change was that the CP became a party of anti-fascism rather than a party of communism. Not that I think communism was possible—nothing like that!—but the Party should have been guided by the contradiction between the productive forces and the productive relations rather than the contradiction between fascism and democracy. Several things laid the foundation for this. The Jews suffered terribly, as is well known, under the fascist system. The Jewish section has always been a very powerful element within the Communist movement. They have provided the *thinkers*. At the end of the war, about seventy per cent of the CP was Jewish, concentrated heavily in the New York area, and I would say about fifty per cent of them were more anti-fascist than they were communist—but the Communist movement everywhere was leading the fight against the fascists.

By 1944-45, the Roosevelt coalition had become the heart and soul of the CP. I was one of the people arguing that we had to have a party based on a scientific evaluation of the evolution of society and *not at all based* on the question of anti-fascism. The question of anti-fascism is tactical, not strategic. I was fighting for the orthodoxy but the vast majority of the comrades accepted this revisionist compromise, even to the extent that a section of the CP declared that the Roosevelt coalition would lead the world to socialism. The financiers are going to need you in the struggle against the industrialists, but how is that going to lead to socialism? Looking back, you can't believe that serious people believed that! At the same time, people high up in the U.S. government, in the scientific community, and in academia were "talking socialism"—not necessarily Soviet socialism, but an orderly society rather than the jungle.

I fought what I considered to be a principled fight. I was expelled without charges or trial. I joined a group of others who had either walked out of the CP or had been expelled and who were trying to form another CP. This was the Provisional Organizing Committee. These were primarily people who had been minor officials within the CP. [But some of them weren't so minor. The head of the organization, Joe Dougher, was the military commander of the Lincoln battalion in Spain and was head of what we called the "Iron Triangle" unit: Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, the heartland of the industrial working class in

the United States.] The POC was marginalized. Nobody talked about it: not the press, not the FBI, not the CP. They killed it with silence and it finally degenerated, splitting into three or four different factions.

ER: Given your criticism of the Party's orientation to the Roosevelt coalition, why wasn't Trotskyism a live option for you in the way that anti-revisionism was? Many American Marxists saw Trotskyism as stillborn by the postwar years but some continued to flock to its banner.

NP: In the Communist-influenced movement you didn't talk to Trotskyites and you didn't talk to people who did talk to Trotskyites. I once asked one of the leading Trotskyites about their early relations with the fascist movement. They told me that nothing could be done until the Russian regime was destroyed. That set me against them forever! The Communist movement was fighting for something that was attainable. The Trotskyite movement was fighting for the same goal but they were fighting for it all at once and it was not tactically attainable. Consequently, they formed an extreme Left and split the movement.

ER: With a politics reminiscent of the CP during the Popular Front years, some veterans of the New Communist Movement (such as Carl Davidson) have argued for some time that leftists ought to work within the left wing of the Democratic Party—within organizations like the Progressive Democrats of America—to "fight the right," to raise political consciousness within such organizations, and to potentially play a role in the eventual formation of a leftist third party that would split the Democrats. Lenny Brody and Luis Rodriguez, former members of LRNA (your organization), have been working with the Justice Party to this effect. What do you make of this strategy?

NP: The old slogan of the First International is the correct slogan: "To the forge, comrades, and strike where the iron is hot!" We should, to the extent that we're capable, be where the social motion is. We should also not be there just because there's activity. We should be there as part of a general plan based on a scientific understanding of how a political process plays out. The social process is that the capitalist parties begin to split tactically over how to achieve their various goals. A third party begins to emerge out of these splits. I take the defeat of Kucinich as a very important step along this way. The Barney Franks and the Kucinichs, who left the Democratic Party in disgust or who have been defeated, are coalescing towards forming a third party that will do properly what the Democratic and Republican parties aren't able to do. We're a very small organization; we don't have the cadre to really make any impact on this. The American left is not going to impact anything! The impact is going to come from the liberal sections of the intelligentsia and certain sections of the bourgeoisie who see the danger of going in the other direction. They'll form a third party, and it might have progressive talk, but it's not going to have any progressive activity. It will mean the end, though, of the total domination of the working class by the two parties. It will be the last gasp of the bourgeois-democratic political process but it's an absolutely inevitable one. We have to go through it. Out of the struggle for the third party we'll create the conditions for a workers' party. To that extent, on a tactical level, I'm all for it! But these people out of the New Left *greatly* overestimate their importance.

ER: Given that Brody and Rodriguez are part of a larger group of New Left-generation cadre that has recently left LRNA to form the Network for Revolutionary Change, and that some of these ex-LRNA cadre are playing leading roles in the formation of the Justice Party, why did they take a different direction and leave LRNA?

NP: There are two foundations for revolutionary movements. One is the objectivity of capital, the struggle that arises from the contradiction between productive forces and productive relations, and the subjective ideology that solves this problem. The other is the spontaneous reaction to oppression that arises from social conditions. Which side do you want to be on? Like most of the New Left, they want to be on the side of the spontaneous reaction to oppression, but that's inevitably going to have plenty of organizers anyways. If they want to contribute to that, OK—but turn us loose! A faction of about ten people quit when they couldn't get what they wanted. They're a grouping primarily around Luis Rodriguez who got the idea that powerful individuals determine what happens in history. They're based on the nationalism of the Latino movement and of the black movement coming out of the 1960s and 70s. We didn't base ourselves on the African-American movement and we got some very good people out of that: 178 people joined us from the Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement. They were all black nationalists. When we told them who we were and how we functioned they stopped immediately with their black nationalism and became real communists. They still are! They were the spontaneous movement. We worked with them but we didn't base ourselves on them or worship them!

ER: What do those who have left LRNA want to do that wouldn't be possible for them to do in LRNA?

NP: A complicated example is what happened in Madison and what is happening in Detroit. In Detroit, you have a political fascist offensive, not an economic struggle. Madison is a trade-union struggle. It's important, but very limited—a question of maintaining their rights. They say that the trade unions are important. The trade unions have never been important! I've been a union bricklayer all my life—I have more trade-union experience than any of them—but in the revolutionary movement the unions cannot, never have and never will, play any decisive role, because they're an integral part of the capitalist system. I went into the Steelworkers for the Party. The Steelworkers had a mixed union and the union had a clause that blacks could not rise above the labor gang. The employers were not our problem—the union was! The petit-bourgeoisie worships this ideology of spontaneous union action without any consideration of the history of American unions. The biggest obstacle to communism

in the world has been the American unions! Look at Walter Reuther and David McDonald. **ER:** Why then did Marx decide to become involved with the British trade unions during the 1860s and form the First International? How should a Marxist recognize the reformist character of trade unions while keeping in mind Marx's own involvement with unions at certain times?

NP: Marx was very self-critical about his position on unions. Engels especially was. They thought that unions were somehow an incipient form of what communism was going to be, the workers learning how to run a government by learning how to run a union. They finally concluded otherwise. Unions play a certain role in intensifying a social struggle, but as far as a class struggle is concerned—that is to say, the question of political power—they're never going to be able to do anything because they're such all-inclusive organizations. It's interesting to note that the first victim of the Soviet revolution was the transportation workers' union. They struck against Soviet power and Lenin crushed them! The revolution in the United States is going to come from the contradiction between the revolutionary character of the productive forces and the stability of the productive relations, *not* from the unions.

ER: Speaking of the politics of the labor movement, how do you assess the accomplishments and ultimate failure of the U.S. Labor Party?

NP: I once had a short talk with Tony Mazzochi, the head of the party, around the time of its formation. I told him: We're all for a labor party, and if you want to head that party, we're going to stand behind you. But we warn you in advance: Conditions are not ripe! You're going to end up with a trade-union party and that can't survive. You have to go through a process in which a bourgeois third party emerges and fails; then you'll have an opportunity. What we warned them about and predicted was exactly what happened! It became a trade-union party and then it collapsed.

ER: Yes, and it collapsed largely over the question of how to approach the electoral arena in the 2000 election, over how to approach not only the Democrats but also Ralph Nader and the Greens.

NP: The experience of the Progressive Party taught me these things. The greatest people in the world were in our leadership, including from the trade unions. At the time of the formation of the Progressive Party, the Communist Party was in control of 11 international unions and a huge section of the African-American movement. People of the very best caliber, like DuBois and Robeson, were close to or in the Communist Party. Even the anti-Communists like Henry Wallace would not red-bait anyone; Wallace was scared of the CP and he didn't move against them. A section of the liberal bourgeoisie was terrified by Truman. There was a moment of possibility. But the reality was that America had the possibility of taking over the entire devastated and starving world. How are you going to form a party against expansion, against wealth? As Marx said, prosperity is the death of a revolution.

What we're seeing today that we couldn't see in 1948 is a fundamental shift in the productive process, perhaps the greatest social revolution there has ever been: destroyed neighborhoods, shuttered factories, kids standing on the street with no past and no future. The first phase of a social revolution is the destruction of the old society. Our society is being destroyed! Does there have to be a political change to express this? Of course! The first change is going to be the attempt of the petit-bourgeoisie—the Kucinichs—to hold this together on a different level. They're going to be part of a third party. The Left is going to jump in that party and do exactly what they did with the Progressive Party: They're going to become absolutely alienated from revolutionary activity because they can't afford to destroy what they're creating.

ER: Given that you view the League as a propaganda organization whose purpose is primarily educational, what would success look like in the present?

NP: This was one of the bones of contention within our organization! Any organization of professional revolutionaries is an organization of propagandists. Is the main obstacle to revolutionary development in America today not the political and intellectual backwardness of the American working class? Can anything be done with a working class that's anti-communist? Is our first task not to win them away from the bourgeoisie ideologically? Lenny Brody believes that if we fan the flames they'll learn. I've been a Communist for seventy-two years and I'll tell you that they're not going to learn from experience! Marx and Engels were clear about this: The most revolutionary weapon in the world is the human mind. If you don't win that, you're not going to win anything.

What we're doing now couldn't be done before in American history. Anyone my age will tell you that the anti-Communist movement in America was anti-black. They hated the Communists because of their demand for equality for blacks, for integration. The American people couldn't be won to Communism because of the race question. So it became part of American Communist history to simply deal with the spontaneous movement and not with the ideology. But the upheavals of the 60s were fights to get into the capitalist system, not out of it. The blacks welcomed the Communists for their fighting capacity, for their morality, but they totally rejected them for their ideology. It's easy to glorify these movements, to make them into what you want them to be, but history doesn't allow you to do that. The American people are going to suffer before they come to the conclusion that they have to unite around the objective reality of the American economy. This reality demands that we take over the economy and run it in the interests of the American people. It can no longer be done on the level of private property. **IP**

Transcribed by Joseph Estes.

The crisis in Greece and the prospects for the Left

Periklis Pavlidis

THE POLITICAL LIFE OF GREECE during the last months has been determined by the quick and complete failure of SYRIZA to achieve its goals through negotiations with the leading powers of the European Union (EU): relaxation of the harsh austerity policies being applied to the country, a partial write-off of its unbearable debt, and thus mitigation of the humanitarian crisis. Though quite modest, SYRIZA's aspirations were not therefore more realistic. Because of its commitment to Greece's Eurozone and EU membership, SYRIZA from the very start subordinated itself to the operating principles of these institutions and the negotiating framework set by the creditors. With Germany playing a decisive role, the representatives of the EU, European Central Bank (ECB), and International Monetary Fund (IMF) treated the SYRIZA government with strong aggression, thereby demonstrating that in today's Europe there is very little, if any, room for left-reformist policies.

In essence, in most of the world, capital forces are promoting most intransigently the neoliberal strategy of abolishing the "social state" and all Keynesian forms of economic regulation. Against this global backdrop, the European integration envisioned by the EU, and in particular by the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) policies, are institutionally grounded in relentless cuts to labor costs, dramatic restrictions to the welfare state and social protections of labor, and the elimination of any possibility for independent national monetary and fiscal policy. Altogether, these developments underscore just how little potential there is for reformist interventions geared toward redistribution of wealth in favor of working class people. The EU/EMU's existence is based fundamentally on institutionalized neoliberalism and austerity.

The intransigence shown by the dominant powers of the EU is particularly noteworthy given that the project of consolidating the EU/Eurozone economy is facing major problems, such as growing inequalities among its member states, the inability of most of them to withstand the competition of countries with stronger economies [Germany in particular], and the debt crisis and economic stagnation of countries in the periphery. The effort to hold together the EU/EMU seems to be piling on structural problems that the global ruling class is in no position to resolve. In today's world, where the traditionally powerful countries of Europe are challenged by new emerging capitalist powers, there is intense pressure on the stronger economies in the EU to derive growth from hyper-exploitation of weak economies and from intensified exploitation of workers all across the EU, a phenomenon accompanied by broad deregulation of employment relations and extensive privatization, including the commercialization of public goods and services.

The EU/EMU integration process has proven unable to reduce inequalities among the different capitalist economies of its member states. On the contrary, liquidating every mechanism of state economic regulation makes it easier for capitalist corporations and the bank-financial oligarchy of the strongest countries (mainly France and Germany) to plunder the wealth of the weakest ones. In these conditions the poor indebted countries of the EU/EMU, lacking any fiscal sovereignty, any control of their banking system, any independence in their public financial and budgetary policy, suffer significant destruction of their productive forces and an immense deterioration of working people's living conditions. The EU/EMU represents a group of institutions that, acting under the hegemony of Germany and its allies, serve as a collective apparatus of European big capital, promoting its interests in the continent and worldwide, elaborating and imposing neoliberal strategy, and carrying out a well-coordinated policy of aggression against the people of wage-labor.

In most respects these institutions are advancing the consensus among major political parties of every member country, even the less economically developed countries. The acceptance of EU/EMU neoliberal rules and policies serves to prevent any political process from reaching conclusions that could challenge the status quo. In other words, the EU/EMU institutions represent something like a super-state of the European bourgeoisies, securing their rule against any struggle of the working class. Unfortunately, as the Greek experience shows, the EU/EMU institutions can easily overcome the people's political choices, expressed via the official system of bourgeois democracy in parliamentary elections, referendums, and so on, whenever those choices do not conform to the neoliberal strategy these institutions centrally implement and impose. In fact, what we have witnessed is the marginalization of bourgeois democracy and its traditional institutions. In their place we have highly centralized bureaucracies that, in practice, dictate orders to national governments, with little to no input from democratic legislative organs.

Given the above, we cannot avoid the conclusion that any hope for a simply parliamentary pathway back to the policies of left-reformism, within the framework of the EU and EMU, is unrealistic. For Greece and several other EU member countries there is no easy solution. Reconstruction of Greece's productive forces and the implementation of a social policy for the benefit of workers seem extremely unlikely within the Eurozone and the EU, but they also seem unlikely in the context of dominant property relations more generally. Therefore, the struggle to provoke a rupture of the EMU/EU should be considered an integral part of the struggle for the socialist emancipation of labor, as the institutions that represent the consensus of the EU and EMU serve to guard capital's hegemony *in the whole continent*.

We should not forget, however, that Greece's membership in the EU (and in NATO, as well) is of strategic importance for the Greek bourgeoisie. Through membership of Greece in the EU and affiliation with its institutions, the Greek bourgeoisie ensures its continued

dominance within the country and protection against the risk of reformist redistributive policies. At the same time, the Greek bourgeoisie thereby attains a stronger presence in international markets and greater scope to develop sub-imperialist activities on the regional level. Consequently, it should be presumed that any effort to disengage the country from these institutions would involve direct and fierce conflict with the Greek bourgeoisie and its social allies. Furthermore, given that Greece's membership in the EU/EMU and NATO is of great geostrategic importance for the Euro-Atlantic imperialist pole, and given that an eventual exit of the country from these institutions would damage the economic-political structures of this pole, it should be presumed that a Greek exit from the EU would result in a fierce conflict with Euro-Atlantic imperialism.

Taking into account the fact that today there is no room for left-wing reforms in the EU/EMU institutions, the decisive role of the Left in challenging neoliberal policies seems to be associated with much deeper social upheavals than those involved when a left-wing party (or coalition of parties) rises to governmental power via the usual parliamentary process. The left-wing, anti-capitalist forces of Greece that favor refusal to pay off debt and an exit from Eurozone and the EU—a development which would inevitably require exiting NATO, too—and see in these positions the will and interests of working-class people expressed must realize, however, that successfully pursuing such an endeavor will constitute a revolutionary social change, bringing with it a most intense conflict with the Greek bourgeoisie and Euro-Atlantic imperialism.

Unfortunately for the Greek Left, the rupture with the EU/EMU is significantly hindered by the very small production capacity of the country. Heavily dependent on the import of technological equipment, as well as fuel and certain raw materials, Greece lacks clear alternatives for how it might be included in a different, more equitable international division of labor. Any potential rupture between Greece and the institutions of Euro-Atlantic imperialism is also hindered by the fact that, for the time being, it seems unlikely for such an endeavor to meet with corresponding movements in other EU countries, without which Greece's future is indeed bleak. In most countries of the European continent, the left-wing forces are small, with little real social influence, while the radical mood of working-class people, where such a mood exists at all, is sporadic at best. Especially in the southern and eastern regions of Europe, which are most directly affected by competition with the northern countries of the EU but also by the global crisis of capitalism, the anti-capitalist spirit is far from claiming a leading historical role.

The *anti-capitalist and communist Left in Greece, as in other crisis-stricken EU countries, faces a great challenge and a still unresolved problem. The Left must defend working-class rights and needs, while promoting the political changes necessary for progressive social development, even though there are very limited (if any) possibilities to reform capitalism and, at the same time, there is not yet any possibility to undertake revolution in order to overthrow it.*

It needs to be stressed that any radical action in Greece must be met with respective ones in other European countries. Only in the case of a general, international challenging of the EU institutions and capitalist rule, in a group of countries, in an entire region of the continent, could we reasonably hope for victory within each country. Only through coordinated action of this kind would it be possible to deactivate the response mechanisms of the dominant imperialist powers and, subsequently, reduce the power of domestic bourgeois forces in each country. The anti-capitalist and communist forces of the Left in Europe, as well as in other continents, must seriously and dispassionately examine whether radical social changes, which might be initiated by disruptions in a few specific countries, can survive and deepen without synchronized or chain upheavals in groups of countries.

Rupture of the EU/Eurozone must be conceived on the scale of an entire region of the continent in light of the global division of labor and its dynamic internationalization of scientific, technological, and productive activity. Under such conditions, no economy, let alone an economy as small as Greece's, can progress in isolated self-sufficiency. The strategic goal of the Left—the socialist emancipation of labor, in tandem with the growth of productive forces—is not possible under a closed economic model in which all basic products are produced internally, nor a primitive exchange model in which national economies are only minimally interconnected via trade of finished goods alone.

We must try to imagine the socialist transcendence of capitalism in the context of the growth and integration of productive forces that capitalism has attained within the EU. Today, that integration involves the imperialist exploitation of weaker economies by the stronger ones, but the emancipatory response to this ugly state of affairs is not the construction of purely national-state socialist economies. Rather, in addition to the socialized enterprises of each country, we must strive for the development of transnational networks of socialist enterprises, production complexes, and infrastructure that all operate under the planned management of transnational institutions. It is the prospect of socialized production on the international level that is needed, not only in order to preserve and develop the current productive forces, but also to transcend capitalism on the national level. Radical social endeavors may start in specific countries but, even if they usher in major social changes on the national level, they will have no future unless they are incorporated in larger, transnational projects that offer real alternatives for the economic integration of nations within an international socialist economy. Such a perception of social emancipation in our time requires a radical redefinition of revolutionary left strategy.

I hasten to clarify here that, by "revolutionary left

forces," I refer to those who definitely set as their target the goal of transcending capitalism and building a socialist-communist society—putting aside, for the moment, the fact that there are very diverse views on the Left as to what the character of such a society would be, concretely. Regardless of these differences, I consider it necessary to stress that a feasible socialist society of the future must be understood in international and indeed global terms. While such a society would initially have a national dimension and would be greatly influenced by national particularities, at the heart of socialism is the prospect of emancipation for humanity, worldwide, founded on the achievements of global civilization, which it is often impossible to grasp through the prism of an ethnocentric analysis of social phenomena. The growth of productive forces par excellence consists in scientific and technological progress, which in our time has a highly developed social character, from the means of planning and management to the manifold interactions between people and nature in order to satisfy human needs. More than ever before, these developments should allow for a more consistent and profound elaboration of socialist strategy.

The current discussions on socialism and communism can be meaningful for the Left and for working people when they examine the material production system in order to reveal possibilities for how to turn workers into genuine subjects of that system, into collective administrators of the productive forces and processes of society. Such possibilities result from dynamic trends of automation of the means of production and what this could bring: the gradual release of workers from the current terms of their engagement in the production process, as servants of the means of production. Great potential can likewise be found in the development and spread of communication and artificial intelligence technologies that can process huge volumes of data, in the extremely accurate modeling and planning of productive activities, and in better means of communication. All of these technologies allow for greater cooperation between remote producers, but also between producers and end consumers, while broadening the decisive productive role of scientific thinking and knowledge, what Marx called the "*general intellect*" and "*general productive force*" of humankind.

The development of the contemporary multinational monopoly corporations, the organization of production in multinational networks, and the deepening of economic interdependence among countries and among regions of the planet all demonstrate that the social character of production is growing on the global scale. Humankind is moving towards the integration of its production, which nevertheless cannot be accomplished under the conditions of dominant capitalist ownership of the means of production. Of course, the trend I am referring to has a contradictory character. Humankind has now developed huge powers that enable the transformation of its living conditions on earth to a great extent; on the other hand, these very powers make the destruction of life possible, to the extent that such powers continue to be used in the service of private, self-seeking interests.

The Left can have a political future and play a leading role in social developments to the extent that it is able to put forth a consistent strategy of social emancipation, grounded in the contemporary achievements of labor and culture, and to the extent that it is able to display to working-class people the modern possibilities for their emancipation and the true pathways leading thereto. The indifference of significant parts of the Left to the fundamental development of socialist theory is the other side of their conformist submission to the prevailing conditions of capitalist society. In other words, today's class struggles in Greece, Europe, and across the world cannot take the offensive and emerge victorious unless they have a clear end goal based on the theoretical awareness of how the organization and development of labor, and therefore of society, could be feasible without the rule of capital, of how it is possible for workers to regain all those functions that capital, as an alienated and uncontrollable social force, performs in the production system. I might add that the various efforts to achieve left unity, in Greece and abroad, tend toward utter irrelevance when they are not focused on strategic goals and the prospects for the emancipation of labor. The power of the Left cannot simply result from gathering its various components; it rather consists in the social importance and the range of its strategic goals and the establishment, based on these goals, of a powerful working class front.

Especially in the developed capitalist societies of the 21st century, discussion about how to create such a working-class political front must take into account the necessity of a crucial alliance between the traditional working class strata, mostly related to physical-manual labor (both industrial and non-industrial), and today's massive and rapidly proletarianized representatives of intellectual labor—scientific and technical workers, production specialists, salaried intelligentsia in the service sector, educators, etc. Both these groups make up the collective worker today, in that the continued functioning of the material production system on a global scale is only feasible in the unity of their labor activities. If, for the class struggles and socialist endeavors of the 20th century, the alliance between industrial workers and the poor peasants were of decisive importance, then today, in the developed capitalist societies, political unity between the representatives of physical and intellectual wage-labor has become crucial. The number of the latter is increasing drastically, even as their traditionally better social status is deteriorating, leading to radicalization. The internationalized character of intellectual wage-labor, and thus its stronger capabilities for understanding the world and organizing, provide more

favorable conditions for a decisive reinforcement of the workers' movement in the great class struggle against the power of capital.

Corresponding to the inescapably international dimension of social revolution in the current situation, and the necessarily global dimensions of socialist strategy, it is essential that political forces of the Left be established not only on the national, but also on the international level, in order to forge a common, cohesive view on the direction, objectives, and content of social change in entire regions of the planet. Only a force of this kind will be able to challenge the power of capital, even on the national level, much less be able to act as a political subject in historical events and transformations. The character of contemporary economic-social relations requires viewing social emancipation from such a perspective. Class struggles on the national level will acquire an invincible dynamism only when they grow as part of coordinated international struggles for revolutionary social changes.

Unfortunately, the necessity of genuine internationalism is often not understood, or is understood only in part, by the Left in Greece and in Europe. Of course, this necessity does not concern the left forces that view the existence of EU/EMU as a given and see the future of European countries only in the framework of this imperialist institution. The forces of the Left that have accepted the EU and, consequently, have accepted the power relations that are characteristic of it, and the principles and rules governing the operation of national economies imposed by it, are in essence subservient to the strategic interests of European capital. They are unable to express a radical alternative.

At the same time, there are left-wing political formations seemingly moving in the opposite direction: challenging the European Union, but under the rubric of ethnocentric perceptions. According to their interpretative framework, European nations are being oppressed and exploited just by neoliberal elites, international bankers, and financial speculators. This is the political framework of patriotic social democracy, which, in its confrontation with the neoliberal strategy of the EU, is systematically downgrading the class character of social problems and concomitantly the class character of the resistance to neoliberal policies. Within countries with highly developed class contradictions, they seek the recovery of "national sovereignty," a return to national currency, and implementation of social welfare policies within a state-regulated capitalist economy. Such a stance is completely hopeless against the scale of production in the EU member countries, much less against global capitalism, which has gone far beyond the borders of national states. The lure of a patriotic defense of social democracy entraps the Left in conservative utopias that deform its true mission: the emancipation of labor and society from the power of capital.

As a revolutionary social force, the Left cannot but be internationalist. Internationalism for the Left means commitment to the final goal of emancipation of labor—a class goal that is at the same time a panhuman goal—which can be fully accomplished only on a global scale. Internationalism of the Left is identified with the universal, emancipatory character of the strategic interests of the working class, from which the necessity of militant solidarity among workers across the world stems, as an essential condition of victory in the struggle for the socialist-communist unification of humankind.

Therefore, internationalism for the Left means unshakeable commitment to conducting independent class politics, defending within specific national-state entities not the interests of the nation, but the strategic interests of wage-labor, as these are the interests that by nature are common for all workers throughout the world. The "national interest" is by definition deceitful, corresponding to the dominant interests of big capital, as well as to the interests, illusions, and aspirations of the *small and middle*-class property *owners* and the national state bureaucracy. In societies of generalized alienation and antagonism, such as the capitalist ones, "national unity" is spurious. Against the fake unity among "citizens," the Left should always put forth the revolutionary prospect of genuine socialist-communist unification of humanity.

It is necessary to note here that a genuine proletarian socialist internationalism in Europe must challenge the EU project and its super-state institutions. The Left should be clear that EU capitalist integration cannot be considered as a way to overcome nationalism, racism, and xenophobia. Indeed, it is exactly the EU and EMU that have created the best conditions for widespread reproduction of nationalist-fascist, racist ideas and movements, due to the severe antagonism the EMU policies have engendered not only between different capitalist enterprises, but also between different national economies, causing unemployment, immiseration, and marginalization, while guaranteeing the domination of the strongest countries.

Faced today with the deep crisis of capitalist integration in Europe and the rise throughout the continent of nationalist-fascist forces that this crisis has politically emboldened, the Left can carry out its historic role only by cultivating, through its political action and theoretical discourse, the workers' strong trust in the feasibility of transcending the relations of exploitation and antagonism among people and nations, and in the feasibility of developing universal relations of comradeship and solidarity. If the concept "Left" continues to have a real social meaning, it cannot but be linked to the theoretical and ideological activity of displaying the current possibilities for the socialist emancipation of labor, while undertaking social struggles and political efforts to establish a social front of workers, on the international level, capable of overthrowing the power of capital. **IP**