

I have a singular honour today, mostly undeserved, of being the recipient of the Otto Nuschke award. I want on this occasion to pay my tribute to Otto Nuschke (1883-1957), whose last speech in the CDU Parteitag in Weimar resounded with these words of exhortation:

"Christian democrats, (let us give) our whole strength for mutual understanding, disarmament and co-existence, and the promotion of Peace and Happiness for all peoples".

(Gerhard Fischer, Otto Nuschke Ein Lebensbild, Union Verlag, Berlin, 1983, p. 272)


In the same speech Otto Nuschke expressed the view (in 1956) that just as the second world war ended with ^{the} emancipation of all the slav^{ic} people of Eastern Europe, the day would soon dawn when the non-white peoples of the Two-third world would find themselves free from political economies of exploitation and oppression.

I salute the memory of Otto Nuschke - heroic resister against totalitarianism, far-sighted friend of the human race, faithful son of the Evangelical Church in De^ut^schland, Champion of the struggle of the oppressed and exploited classes, ~~effective~~ effective publicist for the cause of socialism, seasoned politician and one of the founders of the Christian Democratic Union of De^ut^schland.

May I be permitted to share on this occasion, in honouring the memory of this stalwart servant of socialism and ardent fighter for justice, peace and dignity for all, a few of my own thoughts on the future of humanity and the current debate about the tension between Global Humanism and the Class Struggle.

One engages in such futurological speculation with much hesitation. So much that economic prophets predicted has failed to come true. Capitalism has not yet collapsed. The final triumph of socialism is still in the future. New and unexpected factors arise and change the course of history presumed to have been predictable. The forces of reaction seem to gain new strength from unexpected quarters. The market economy world has shown a resilience which few thought it possessed. It has survived many crises through devious and sometimes anti-human devices. Manipulation of the money market, juggling fiscal and exchange relations, creating artificial markets for armaments by fomenting local wars and false fears of foreign attack; securing billion-dollar orders with hare-brained schemes like strategic Defense Initiative, making nations insecure through strategies of 'limited nuclear war' heightening tension and promoting the arms race, de-stabilizing nations to advance the arms trade - so many devices have been found to keep a sick world market economy artificially propped up.

The major instrument for the defense of the capitalist system has been the uncanny alliance among Transnational Corporations, military establishments, and the institutions and personnel of scientific-technological research, in order to control and exploit the political economic process in many countries. The tentacles of this world-wide system reach into all countries - socialist countries not excluded. Techniques of a very advanced nature have now been developed to wage war on non-cooperating countries through de-stabilization and exploitation of internal conflicts within such nations. But also sophisticated techniques have been developed to co-opt socialist systems into the world market economy system.

 The enemy that socialism has to contend with looks gigantic, sinister and more sophisticated than many first thought.

While socialists cannot be intimidated by the seemingly giant strength and wily cunning strategies of the enemy, neither can they afford to under-estimate the forces against which they have to contend.

There is no doubt, however, that even this great struggle against the forces of reaction should take second place when put side by side with the other great peril - a possible nuclear holocaust which can finish off all classes, exploiters as well as exploited. Not everyone, even in the developed countries, is aware how close this peril of a nuclear war has

been several times in the recent past. Only those who are privy to what is going on behind the scenes realize how ^{proximat} ~~close~~ to us the peril of omnicide has always been and still is.

The recent signing of the INF treaty, (a historic and most significant step in the hesitant and unsteady progress towards a world without nuclear weapons,) should not lull us into some sort of euphoria. The world crisis is still very much there. The market economy system has not opted for perpetual peaceful co-existence with socialism. We will be fooling ourselves if we deduce from the four recent summit meetings between the USA and USSR that the western establishment has given up the policy of confrontation and opted for detente and disarmament. It is not possible even today for the socialist nations to let down their defenses or ^{to} relax in their vigilance.

At the same time it is not possible for the socialist nations to concentrate all their efforts on the defense of socialist values and insti^tutions. To do so has already proved to be inviting another kind of danger - a repressive political system, a stagnant economy, brooding discont^ent and the collapse of creativity among the people. Socialism can thrive only on a democratic foundation, and the requirements of military defense are always counter-democratic, whether in the market economy or in the socialist system.

I am aware of the fact that the GDR economy is by no means stagnant, that even among the socialist countries the economic achievement of the G.D.R. is without parallel. But that does

not mean the absence of major problems in a situation of encirclement by ^a fully armed market economy system determined to overthrow socialism.

It is indeed a dilemma. A socialist party loses all significance if it does not keep the class struggle at the top of its agenda. There is no way to succeed in building socialism without going through the necessary struggles to overthrow the powers of oppression and exploitation - both in one's own nation as well as internationally. And yet precisely in pursuing that struggle one dare not provoke the enemy to the point of effectually committing racial suicide. It is all right occasionally to taunt the enemy with being just a paper tiger; but the fact still remains that there is no limit to what desperate madness even in a paper tiger can do.

On the other hand, there is a way out of this dilemma, ~~a dilemma~~, a difficult way, nevertheless ^e a way that needs to be tried. It is indeed a strategy, but not a dishonest one. This requires the following basic affirmations:

- (a) In the present crisis of human history there is no viable alternative to peaceful co-existence between various political economic systems, especially if they possess nuclear weapons capable of destroying all of us.
- (b) The only possible choice is between armed co-existence on the basis of mutual deterrence by nuclear weapons on the one hand and on the other an uneasy, competitive but friendly and co-operative co-existence in a setting

of detente and disarmament.

- (c) To choose the option of armed co-existence is to make it exceedingly difficult for socialist societies to be genuinely democratic, for the working people to be genuinely creative, and for a high standard of living to be assured for all in a socialist country.
- (d) On the other hand, the option of armed co-existence based on mutual deterrence, at least in the short term, works to the advantage of market economy capitalism; for that system's survival depends on constantly expanding markets; and these seem to be assured by an accelerating arms race and by the world-wide growth of militarism fostered by deterrence-based co-existence. Capitalism may not succeed permanently in promoting the arms race and thereby perpetually expanding its market. It may collapse from its own debt (or credit) burden and of creativity induced by over-investment of resources and personnel in non-productive military consumption. But the system has shown, so far, rather marvellous and resilient ingenuity in facing its crises and in overcoming them temporarily. By persisting in a deterrence-based co-existence, the socialist countries would be giving backhanded encouragement to the market economy system.
- (e) If on the other hand a situation of true detente and disarmament can be achieved and socialist economies can not only drastically cut down their defense expenditures but also scale down their posture of total vigilance, socialism stands a better chance of reaching the standar

of living necessary for a dignified human existence, and even of outstripping the market economies in both quality and price of consumer goods offered to the world market.

In other words the second alternative, namely peaceful co-existence of socialist economies with market economy countries, in an ambiance of detente and disarmament, is the better strategy for socialism's waging war against systems of oppression and exploitation.

There is little chance that the market economy system can survive much longer in its present form if the continuing arms race and the accelerating growth of militarism in the world were not there. Competing in a true atmosphere of unrepressive freedom and unarmed co-existence based on mutual trust, with renewed creativity in economic and cultural activity and true democratic freedoms, socialism can beat capitalism in sportsmanlike combat - so long as the game is played according to rules and properly umpired. The rules of common security have yet to be developed. There can be no reliable umpire other than a representative body of all humanity.

There is some chance that there can be a comparatively peaceful transition to socialism world-wide. I say 'comparatively' because privileged classes^S do not give up their prerogatives without a struggle. And yet we have seen in India 526 Rajahs and Maharajas giving up without much of a struggle. Of course some people from the privileged classes, as well as lots of people from the working classes, will seek

privilege and undue advantage within a socialist system, as history has already taught us. That calls for a different kind of vigilance on the part of socialism.

The collapse of capitalism may be accompanied by some last-ditch struggles characterized by madness and despair. It is therefore important, for the sake of common security, to eliminate nuclear weapons from our planet and to ban them effectively so that this last ditch madness does not become nuclear madness. We must make the world safe by eliminating nuclear weapons altogether from earth and sea, sky and space. In a nuclear world we will always be insecure, because madness is always a possibility.

It is in this context that we note the outstanding efforts of the Peace Movement in the GDR to eliminate nuclear weapons and to create Nuclear Weapons Free Zones wherever possible. I want at this point to salute the government, the peace movements and the people of the GDR for the high quality leadership they have given and are still giving in the world-wide movement for peace with justice, for elimination of all nuclear weapons, and for common security without weapons of mass destruction.

It is in this context ^{also} that we take a look at only one of the many points raised in the current debate about Perestroika Glasnost and New Thinking.

Two questions have been raised and need to be answered: Does the Global humanism of the New Thinking associated with

the concepts of perestroika-glasnost really displace the centrality of the notion of class struggle which has guided marxist thought in the past? If it actually does so, can such a global humanist ^{approach} be justified in marxist terms?

My own tentative answer to both questions is a qualified yes.

There has always been a dialectical tension between the concepts and strategies of class-struggle on the one hand and the need for peaceful co-existence of opposing ideologies and political economic systems on the other. To abandon this tension would be to adopt a naively Trotskyite notion of permanent revolution. Permanent revolution is a respectable Marxist concept, but has not always been a practical option, especially when the oppressor is armed with weapons of mass destruction. The fact that the party of the working class is also so armed does not reduce the risk of a permanent revolution. ^A ~~or~~ military confrontation ~~that~~ could lead to a nuclear holocaust which would destroy all classes, annihilate the achievements of centuries of human knowledge and culture, and imperil the very existence of any but the most stunted forms of life on our planet. There can be no moral justification for a class struggle where nuclear-military confrontation between the classes could lead to ~~omnicide~~ and ^{bio-} ~~bi-~~ocide at worst, and at best to a destruction of a large part of humanity and its achievements, and to a permanent poisoning of the total biosphere.

Faced with that kind of a choice, a genuine class struggle which aims at the emancipation of the oppressed and exploited classes, has to choose a strategy in which the elimination of nuclear weapons from the planet, the protection of space from becoming a launching pad for directed energy weapons, and the painstaking creation of a system of common security for all take a higher priority than military confrontation.

The working classes cannot abandon the class struggle or actually displace it from its centrality in assessment of reality and in formulation of strategy. What is set aside for the time being is not the class struggle as such, but a particular form of class confrontation that could lead to heavy and unacceptable damage to the oppressed and exploited classes.

Global humanism is thus not an alternative to the class struggle, but only its original framework and necessary basis. The class struggle as a concept was from the beginning based on the primary principle of socialist humanism, and was never more than a means to the emancipation of all classes from oppressive and exploitive structures, and to the establishment of a classless global human society with peace, security, justice, dignity and freedom of creativity for all. The victory of the working class can only be a means to go on to a global society of freedom, dignity and justice.

Divorced from that original socialist humanism, the concept of class struggle can become a dangerous dogma and a mis-leading strategy. There is, I sadly note, arising all over the world in leftist political circles, a dogmatic and non-contextual emphasis on class struggle and class confrontation which does not take adequately seriously the peril of a nuclear holocaust. These circles, strangely enough have a record of fervent campaigning in the past for nuclear disarmament as a high priority for the revolutionary struggle. But they now seem to feel that the peril of a nuclear catastrophe is neither imminent nor so alarming. They seem to feel that the nuclear powers of the market economy world would not attempt even a "limited nuclear war", since these powers have correctly assessed its enormous consequences to themselves. In other words, to put it bluntly, these leftist circles have enough confidence in security by mutual deterrence to make them under-estimate the real danger of such a "limited nuclear war" breaking out by design or by accident. They seem to ignore the fact that such a "limited nuclear war" has been and still forms part of western military strategy. They also fail to take into account the fact that the Pentagon which was in the beginning largely opposed to President Reagan's original strategy of "star wars" as a defence initiative, later approved it as part of an offensive strategy including a decapitating first strike and the of a limited nuclear war to fight off the weakened but still considerable retaliatory attack which is to be expected.

CRITICISM OF THE NEW THINKING

Among the leftist parties which have raised questions about General Secretary Gorbachov's statements on perestroika and glasnost one counts the American Communist Party and the Communist Party of India, (Marxist). Gus Hall, General Secretary of the American Communist Party, for example, warns us of the danger in accepting wrong ideas in the name of "new thinking". In an article entitled "The World We Preserve Must Be Livable"², he says:

"Throughout the history of the working class movement, the 'something new' concepts have always been used to bypass, cover up or eliminate the concept of the class struggle. To eliminate the idea of the class struggle one has to accept that somehow the capitalist class is changing its inherent nature, giving up its drive for maximum profits. To eliminate the idea of the class struggle one has to explain how the basic laws of capitalist development have somehow changed. This is impossible."

Gus Hall poses the question : "Should all struggles for a better life, including the class struggle and the national liberation struggles, be subordinated to the struggle to preserve humanity?" He answers his own question with a "no".

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2. The Marxist, New Delhi, Vol. VI (2), April-June 1988
pp. 58 ff
 3. ibid. p. 59

His argument is that most of the oppressed and exploited peoples of the world are not interested in the idea of preserving humanity, if that is divorced from the struggle to make life more worth living. He takes Gorbachov to task (without specifically mentioning his name) for a 1987 statement by Yevgeni Ambartsumov in the World Marxist Review:

"I do not rule out a negative reaction particularly among those who continue to take a fetishistic view of the class struggle, although Lenin, as we all know, put the interests of social development as a whole above the class interests of the proletariat. The entire world has today found itself in a situation in which precisely human interests must be given priority. In this lies the essence of our new way of thinking" ⁴

Academician Ambartsumov's statement can be mis-understood as anti-class-struggle. But in fact he speaks only of a priority for global human interests, and not of abandoning the class struggle in the interests of human survival.

Looking at the same issue from a Two-third World perspective, the C.P.I.(M) documents question the 'New Thinking' of the C.P.S.U. In a critique of General Secretary Gorbachev's Report on the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution, the CPI (M) Central Committee (May 3-6, 1988) adopted a resolution which said among other things:

4. World Marxist Review No. 10 (1987) p.152. This was response to an earlier article by Dmitri Likhachev entitled "Become a Citizen of the World" (W.M.R.No.5,

- (a) Gorbachov is fundamentally wrong in assuming that the world is becoming more and more inter-dependent and integral. It is "unscientific" to isolate the internationalisation of economic life from the fact of class struggle which is integral to global economic life. ⁵
- (b) Gorbachov is wrong again in assuming that Capitalism is willing or able to adapt itself to the conditions "of a nuclear weapons free world, and to a new and equitable economic order." ⁶
- (c) Gorbachov is wrong in arguing from the fact that there has been no third world war, that Capitalism is becoming peaceful. It has waged or taken part already (since the second world war) in a hundred or more local wars. ⁷
- (d) Gorbachov is wrong in arguing that "at the present level of technology and organisation of production, reconversion and demilitarisation of the (capitalist) economy are feasible". Capitalism and militarism are integral to each other, and the capitalist military machine can be converted to peaceful use only when the capitalist class is no longer in power.
- (e) Gorbachev under-estimates the strength and significance of Third World liberation struggles in the total movement of emancipation of the working class.

5. The Marxist Vol. VI (2). April-June 1988, p. 14

6. ibid. p. 18

7. ibid. pp. 20ff

8. ibid pp. 26ff

The Indian Marxist Party at a later Central Committee meeting (August 8-10, 1988) came to a more positive assessment of the New Thinking. They have reaffirmed the following principles, on which they generally agree with the CPSU.

- (a) The people cannot be replaced by the Party. There is no alternative to direct involvement of the people in governing society, and ^vmanaging the economy.⁹
- (b) The Party has a guiding and leading role in society as a vanguard of the working class.
- (c) The growth of bureaucracy is indeed "a serious impediment, and, if unchecked, becomes a danger"¹⁰
- (d) The New Thinking in the Soviet Union should be understood also in the light of the practical problems encountered by the Soviet economy.

The August 1988 resolution of the CPI (M) cautions the New Thinking on the following points:

- (a) Too ^{severe} ~~severe~~ and one-sided criticism of the past can be counter-productive. The assessment of Stalin suffers from overlooking the ~~the~~ positive achievements of the period.
- (b) The emphasis on individual human rights should never be at the expense of a basic socialist vision and perspective.

9. "On Recent Developments in the Soviet Union" The Marxist
VI (2) p. 34ff

10 ibid p. 36.

- (c) The working class and the Party of the working class have a special role in advancing socialism, and this should not be ignored in adopting any global humanist or national democratic perspective.

This is indeed a sober and more balanced statement than the May 88 statement of the Central Committee of C.P.I.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

For a non-Communist like the present speaker, it seems obvious that the New Thinking in the Soviet Union did raise some questions in the minds of many socialist parties whether the central marxist notion of Class Struggle was being superseded by a notion of Global Humanism. These fears seem to be not well grounded.

No one can question the fact that the nuclear-environmental peril threatens the survival of humanity, and that the end of humanity would also mean the end of all class. Survival is important above all, say some, since there can be no class struggle without it. Others like Gus Hall say: Survival by itself is not a worthy goal if what survives is an unjust and exploitative society.

Progressive people in the Two-Third World have always held that Peace without Justice is not worth striving for. What all of us need to distinguish at this time is between Peace and Disarmament ^{on the one hand,} ~~as such,~~ and avoiding a nuclear catastrophe. If confrontation would lead to catastrophe, then

confrontation may not be in the long term interests of the Class Struggle. If de-emphasizing the class struggle would help to promote detente and avoid confrontation then why not, some say.

In any case the de-emphasizing of the class struggle can only be a temporary matter of strategy and tactics; the socialist parties cannot afford to set aside the primacy and centrality of the class struggle. But if it is known to the Market Economy people that such a de-emphasis is only a temporary and tactical matter how seriously will they take it?

The effectiveness of the New Thinking, I believe, should not be assessed on the basis of a false dichotomy between global humanism and class struggle. It should prove its worth by creating a climate of detente leading to concrete plans for total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, and to global co-operation for saving the biosphere from catastrophe. If it succeeds in these two matters, as well as in the improvement of the standards of quality and effectiveness in socialist production, then the cause of socialism would be truly advanced.