1968, Revolution in the world-system

Theses and queries

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Thesis 1: *1968 was a revolution in and of the world-system*

The revolution of 1968 was a revolution; it was a single revolution. It was marked by demonstrations, disorder, and violence in many parts of the world over a period of at least three years. Its origins, consequences, and lessons cannot be analyzed correctly by appealing to the particular circumstances of the local manifestations of this global phenomenon, however much the local factors conditioned the details of the political and social struggles in each locality.

As an event, 1968 has long since ended. However, it was one of the great, formative events in the history of our modern world-system, the kind we call watershed events. This means that the cultural-ideological realities of that world-system have been definitively changed by the event, itself the crystallization of certain long-existing structural trends within the operation of the system.

Origins

Thesis 2: *The primary protest of 1968 was against U.S. hegemony in the world-system (and Soviet acquiescence in that hegemony)*

In 1968, the world was still in the midst of what has come to be called in France the "thirty glorious" years – the period of incredible expansion of the capitalist world-economy following the end of the Second World War. Or rather, 1968 immediately followed the first significant evidence of the beginning of a long world-economic stagnation, that is, the serious difficulties of the U.S. dollar in 1967 (difficulties that have never since ceased).

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The period 1945–1967 had been one of unquestioned hegemony of the United States in the world-system, whose bedrock was the incredible superiority in productive efficiency of the United States in all fields in the aftermath of the Second World War. The United States translated this economic advantage into a worldwide political and cultural domination by undertaking four main policy initiatives in the post-1945 period. It constructed around itself an "alliance system" with western Europe (and Japan) characterized as the leadership of the "Free World," and invested in the economic reconstruction of these areas (the Marshall Plan, etc.). The United States sought thereby both to ensure the role of western Europe and Japan as major economic customers and to guarantee their internal political stability and international political clientship.

Secondly, the United States entered into a stylized Cold War relationship with the U.S.S.R. based on reserving to the U.S.S.R. a small but important zone of political domination (eastern Europe). This so-called Yalta arrangement enabled both countries to present their relationship as an unlimited ideological confrontation, with the important proviso that no changes in the East-West line were to occur and no actual military confrontations were to ensue, especially in Europe.

Thirdly, the United States sought to achieve a gradual, relatively bloodless decolonization of Asia and Africa, on the assumption that this could be arranged via so-called moderate leadership. This was made all the more urgent by the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in China, a victory (be it noted) that was achieved despite the counsels of the U.S.S.R. Moderation was defined as the absence of significant ideological links of this leadership with the U.S.S.R. and world Communism and, even more, the willingness of the decolonized states to participate in the existing set of international economic arrangements. This process of decolonization under the control of moderates was abetted by the occasional and judicious use of limited U.S. military force.

Fourthly, the U.S. leadership sought to create a united front at home by minimizing internal class conflict, through economic concessions to the skilled, unionized, working class on the one hand, and through enlisting U.S. labor in the worldwide anti-Communist crusade on the other hand. It also sought to dampen potential race conflict by eliminating blatant discrimination in the political arena (end of segregation in the armed forces, constitutional invalidation of segregation in all arenas,

Voting Rights Act). The United States encouraged its principal allies to work in parallel ways toward maximizing internal unity.

The result of all these policy initiatives by the United States was a system of hegemonic control that operated quite smoothly in the 1950s. It made possible the continuing expansion of the world-economy, with significant income benefits for "middle" strata throughout the world. It made possible the construction of the United Nations network of international agencies, which at that time reflected the political will of the United States and ensured a comparatively stable world political arena. It contributed to the "decolonization" of large parts of what came to be called the Third World with surprising rapidity. And it ensured that, in the West, generally, the 1950s was a period of relative political quietude.

Nonetheless, by the 1960s, this pattern of successful "hegemony" had begun to fray, in part because of its very success. The economic reconstruction of the U.S.'s strong allies became so great that they began to reassert some economic (and even some political) autonomy. This was one, albeit not the only, meaning of Gaullism, for example. The death of Stalin marked the end of a "monolithic" Soviet bloc. It was followed, as we know, by a (still ongoing) process of destalinization and desatellization, the two major turning-points of which were the Report of Kruschchev to the XXth Party Congress in 1956 and the Sino-Soviet split in 1960. The smoothness of the decolonization of the Third World was disturbed by two long and draining anti-colonial wars in Algeria and Vietnam (to which should be associated the long Cuban struggle). Finally, the political "concessions" of the 1950s to "minority groups" in the United States (and elsewhere in the Western world) accentuated expectations that were not in fact being met, either in the political or the economic arenas, and hence in actual practice stimulated rather than constrained further political mobilization.

The 1960s began with the tandem of Kennedy and Kruschchev, who in effect promised to do things better. Between them, they succeeded in lifting the heavy ideological lids that had so successfully held down the world in the 1950s, without however bringing about any fundamental reforms of the existing system. When they were removed from power, and replaced by the tandem Johnson-Brezhnev, the hopes of the early 1960s disappeared. However, the renewed ideological pressures that the powers attempted to reapply were now being placed on what was a

more disabused world public opinion. This was the pre-revolutionary tinderbox in which opposition to U.S. hegemony, in all its multiple expressions, would explode in 1968 – in the U.S., in France, in Czechoslovakia, in Mexico, and elsewhere.

Thesis 3: *The secondary, but ultimately more passionate, protest of 1968 was against the "old left" antisystemic movements*

The nineteenth century saw the birth of two major varieties of antisystemic movements – the social and the national movements. The former emphasized the oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. The second emphasized the oppression of underdog peoples (and "minorites") by dominant groups. Both kinds of movements sought to achieve, in some broad sense, "equality." In fact, both kinds of movements used the three terms of the French revolutionary slogan of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" virtually interchangeably.

Both kinds of movements took concrete organizational form in one country after another, eventually almost everywhere, in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of twentieth century. Both kinds of movements came to emphasize the importance of obtaining state power as the indispensable intermediate achievement on the road to their ultimate objectives. The social movement, however, had an important worldwide split in the early twentieth century concerning the road to state power (parliamentary versus insurrectionary strategies).

By 1945, there existed three clear and separate networks of such movements on the world scene: the Third International Communist parties; the Second International social-democratic parties; the various nationalist (or national liberation) movements. The period 1945–1968 was a period of remarkable political achievement for these three networks of movements. Third International parties came to power, by one means or another, in a series of countries more or less contiguous to the U.S.S.R. (eastern Europe, China, North Korea). Second International parties (I use the term loosely, including in this category the Democratic Party in the United States as Roosevelt reshaped it) came to power (or at least achieved *droit de cité*, that is, the right of *alternance*) in the western world (western Europe, North America, Australasia). Nationalist or national liberation movements came to power in most formerly colonized areas in Asia, the Middle East, Afri-

ca, the Caribbean, and in somewhat different forms in long-independent Latin America.

The important point for the analysis of the revolution of 1968 was that the new movements that emerged then were led largely by young people who had grown up in a world where the traditional antisystemic movements in their countries were not in an early phase of mobilization but had already achieved their intermediate goal of state power. Hence these "old" movements could be judged not only on their promises but on their practices once in power. They were so judged, and to a considerable degree they were found wanting.

They were found wanting on two main grounds. First, they were found wanting in their efficacity in combatting the existing capitalist world-system and its current institutional incarnation, U.S. hegemony. Secondly, they were found wanting in the quality of life they had created in the "intermediate" state structures they presumably controlled. Thus it was that, in the words of one famous 1968 aphorism, they were no longer to be considered "part of the solution." Rather, they had become "part of the problem."

The anger of the U.S. SDS against "liberals," of the *soixante-huitards* against the PCF (not to speak of the socialists), of the German SDS against the SPD was all the more passionate because of their sense of fundamental betrayal. This was the real implication of that other 1968 aphorism: "Never trust anyone over the age of 30." It was less generational at the level of individuals than generational at the level of antisystemic organizations. I take it as no accident that the major outbreak in the Soviet bloc was in Czechoslovakia, a country with a particularly long and strong Third International tradition. The leaders of the Prague Spring fought their struggle in the name of "humanist Communism," that is, against the betrayal that Stalinism represented. I take it also as no accident that the major outbreak in the Third World was in Mexico, the country that had the oldest national liberation movement continuously in power, or that particularly important outbreaks occurred in Dakar and in Calcutta, two cities with very long nationalist traditions.

Not only was the revolution of 1968 directed, even if only secondarily, against the "old lefts" throughout the world, but these "old lefts" responded, as we know, in coin. The "old lefts" were first of all astonished

at finding themselves under attack from the left (who us, who have such impeccable credentials?), and then deeply enraged at the adventurism that the "new lefts" represented in their eyes. As the "old lefts" responded with increasing impatience and hostility to the spreading "anarchism" of the "new lefts," the latter began to place greater and greater emphasis on the ideological centrality of their struggle with the "old lefts." This took the form of the multivariate "maoisms" that developed in the early 1970s in all parts of the world, including of course in China itself.

Thesis 4: *Counter-culture was part of revolutionary euphoria, but was not politically central to 1968*

What we came to call in the late 1960s "counter-culture" was a very visible component of the various movements that participated in the revolution of 1968. We generally mean by counter-culture behavior in daily life (sexuality, drugs, dress) and in the arts that is unconventional, non-"bourgeois," and Dionysiac. There was an enormous escalation in the quantity of such behavior directly associated with activism in the "movement." The Woodstock festival in the United States represented a kind of symbolic highpoint of such movement-related counter-culture.

But of course, a counter-culture was not a particularly new phenomenon. There had been for two centuries a "Bohemia" associated with youth and the arts. The relaxation of puritanical sexual mores had been a steady linear development throughout the twentieth century worldwide. Furthermore, "revolutions" had often previously been the occasion of counter-cultural affirmation. Here, however, two models of previous revolutions should be noted. In those revolutions that had been planned, organized, and involved long military struggle, revolutionary puritanism usually became an important element of discipline (as in the history of the Chinese Communist Party). Where, however, revolutionary circumstances included a large measure of spontaneous activity (as was the case in the Russian Revolution of 1917 or the triumph of Castro in Cuba), the spontaneity involved a breakdown in social constraints and hence was associated, at least initially, with counter-culture (for example, "free love" in post-1917 Russia). The revolution of 1968 had of course a particularly strong component of unplanned spontaneity and therefore, as the thesis says, counter-culture became part of the revolutionary euphoria.

Nonetheless, as we all learned in the 1970s, it is very easy to dissociate counter-culture from political (revolutionary) activity. Indeed, it is easy to turn counter-cultural trends into very profitable consumption-oriented life-styles (the transition from yippies to yuppies). While, therefore, the counter-culture of the new left was salient to most of these forces themselves, as it was to their enemies, in the final analysis it was a minor element in the picture. It may be one of the consequences of 1968 that Dionysiac life styles spread further. It is not one of its legacies. It is to the political legacies that we must now turn.

Legacies

Legacies of watershed-events are always complex phenomena. For one thing, they are always ambiguous. For another, they are always the object of a struggle by various heirs to claim the legacy, that is, the legitimacy of a tradition. Please note that there already exists a tradition of 1968. Traditions are rapidly created, and the "tradition" of the Revolution of 1968 was already functioning by the early 1970s. And in 1988 there are many celebrations, many books, and many attempts at recuperation as well. This should neither surprise us nor dismay us. World-historic events have lives of their own and they resist any kind of simple capture. 1968 is no different. Having thus warned you against myself, I shall nonetheless put before you what I think are the two principal legacies of 1968.

Thesis 5: *Revolutionary movements representing "minority" or underdog strata need no longer, and no longer do, take second place to revolutionary movements representing presumed "majority" groups*

1968 was the ideological tomb of the concept of the "leading role" of the industrial proletariat. This leading role had long been challenged, but never before so massively and so efficaciously. For in 1968 it was being challenged on the grounds that the industrial proletariat was and would always structurally remain just one component among others of the world's working class.

The historic attitude of both varieties of "old left" movements (the socialist and the nationalist) was that they represented the interests of the "primary" oppressed – either the "working class" of a given country or the "nation" whose national expression was unfulfilled. These movements took the view that the complaints of "other" groups who saw

themselves as being treated unequally – the unfulfilled nationalities for socialist movements, the working class for nationalist movements, women for both kinds of movements, and any other group that could lay claim to social or political oppression – were at best secondary and at worst diversionary. The "old left" groups tended to argue that their own achievement of state power had to be the prime objective and the prior achievement, after which (they argued) the secondary oppressions would disappear of themselves or at least they could be resolved by appropriate political action in the "post-revolutionary" era.

Needless to say, not everyone agreed with such reasoning. And the socialist and nationalist movements of the world often quarreled fiercely with each other over precisely this issue of priority of struggle. But none of the "old left" movements ever ceded theoretical ground on this issue of strategic priorities in the struggle for equality, although many individual movements made tactical and temporary concessions on such issues in the interests of creating or reinforcing particular political alliances.

As long as the "old left" movements were in their pre-revolutionary, mobilizing phases, the argument about what would or would not happen after their achievement of state power remained hypothetical. But once they were in state power, the practical consequences could be assessed on the basis of some evidence. By 1968, many such assessments had been made, and the opponents of the multiple "other" inequalities could argue, with some plausibility, that the achievement of power by "old left" groups had not in fact ended these "other" inequalities, or at least had not sufficiently changed the multiple group hierarchies that had previously existed.

At the same time, a century of struggle had begun to make clear two sociological realities that had great bearing on this debate. The first was that, contrary to prior theorizing, the trend of capitalist development was not to transform almost all the world's laboring strata into urban, male, adult, salaried factory workers, the ideal-type of the "proletarian" as traditionally conceived. The reality of capitalism was far more occupationally complex than that. This ideal-type "proletarian" had represented a minority of the world's laboring strata in 1850, of course. But it had then been thought this was merely transitional. However, such ideal-type "proletarians" remained a minority in 1950. And it was now clear that this particular occupational profile would probably remain a minority in 2050. Hence, to organize a movement around this group

was to give priority – permanent and illegitimate priority – to the claims of one variety over other varieties of the world's laboring strata.

Analogously, it had become clear that "nationalities" were not just there in some form that could be objectively delineated. Nationalities were rather the product of a complex process of ongoing social creation, combining the achievement of consciousness (by themselves and by others) and socio-juridical labeling. It followed that for every nation there could and would be sub-nations in what threatened to be an unending cascade. It followed that each transformation of some "minority" into a "majority" created new "minorities." There could be no cut-off of this process, and hence no "automatic" resolution of the issue by the achievement of state power.

If the "proletariat" and the "oppressed nations" were not destined to transform themselves into uncontested majorities, but would forever remain one kind of "minority" alongside other kinds of "minorities," their claim to strategic priority in the antisystemic struggle would thereby be grievously undermined. 1968 accomplished precisely this undermining. Or rather, the revolution of 1968 crystallized the recognition of these realities in the worldwide political action of antisystemic movements.

After 1968, none of the "other" groups in struggle – neither women nor racial "minorities" nor sexual "minorities" nor the handicapped nor the "ecologists" (those who refused the acceptance, unquestioningly, of the imperatives of increased global production) – would ever again accept the legitimacy of "waiting" upon some other revolution. And since 1968, the "old left" movements have themselves become increasingly embarrassed about making, have indeed hesitated to continue to make, such demands for the "postponement" of claims until some presumed post-revolutionary epoch. It is easy enough to verify this change in atmosphere. A simple quantitative content analysis of the world's left press, comparing say 1985 and 1955, would indicate a dramatic increase of the space accorded to these "other" concerns that had once been considered "secondary."

Of course, there is more. The very language of our analyses has changed, has consciously and explicitly been changed. We worry about racism and sexism even in arenas once thought "harmless" (appellations, humor, etc.). And the structure of our organizational life has also changed. Whereas prior to 1968 it was generally considered a

desideratum to unify all existing antisystemic movements into one movement, at least into one movement in each country, this form of unity is no longer an unquestioned desideratum. A multiplicity of organizations, each representing a different group or a different tonality, loosely linked in some kind of alliance, is now seen, at least by many, as a good in itself. What was a *pis aller* is now proclaimed as a "rainbow coalition" (a U.S. coinage that has spread).

The triumph of the Revolution of 1968 has been a triple triumph in terms of racism, sexism, and analogous evils. One result is that the legal situations (state policies) have changed. A second result is that the situations within the antisystemic movements have changed. A third result is that mentalities have changed. There is no need to be Polyannish about this. The groups who were oppressed may still complain, with great legitimacy, that the changes that have occurred are inadequate, that the realities of sexism and racism and other forms of oppressive inequality are still very much with us. Furthermore, it is no doubt true that there has been "backlash" in all arenas, on all these issues. But it is pointless also not to recognize that the Revolution of 1968 marked, for all these inequalities, a historic turning-point.

Even if the states (or some of them) regress radically, the antisystemic movements will never be able to do so (or, if they do, they will thereby lose their legitimacy). This does not mean that there is no longer a debate about priorities among antisystemic movements. It means that the debate has become a debate about fundamental strategy, and that the "old left" movements (or tendencies) are no longer refusing to enter into such a debate.

Thesis 6: *The debate on the fundamental strategy of social transformation has been reopened among the antisystemic movements, and will be the key political debate of the coming twenty years*

There exist today, in a broad sense, six varieties of antisystemic movements. (a) In the Western countries, there are "old left" movements in the form of the trade-unions and segments of the traditional left parties – labor and social-democratic parties, to which one might perhaps add the Communist parties, although except for Italy these are weak and growing weaker. (b) In the same Western countries, there is a wide variety of new social movements – of women, "minorities," Greens, etc. (c) In the socialist bloc, there are the traditional Communist parties in power, among whom a strain of persistent antisystemic virus has never

been extinguished, which gives rise to renewed (and "feverish") activity from time to time. The Gorbachev phenomenon, insofar as it appeals to "Leninism" against "Stalinism," can be taken as evidence of this. (d) In this same socialist bloc, a network is emerging of extra-party organizations, quite disparate in nature, which seem increasingly to be taking on some of the flavor of Western new social movements. They have, however, the distinctive feature of an emphasis on the themes of human rights and anti-bureaucracy. (e) In the Third World, there are segments of those traditional national liberation movements still in power (as, for example, in Algeria, Nicaragua, and Mozambique) or heirs to such movements no longer in power (although "heritages" such as Nasserism in the Arab world tend to fritter). Of course, in countries with unfullfilled revolutions (such as South Africa or El Salvador), the movements, still necessarily in their mobilizing phase of struggle, have the strength and the characteristics of their predecessors in other states, when they were in that phase. (f) And finally, in these same Third World countries, there are new movements that reject some of the "universalist" themes of previous movements (seen as "Western" themes) and put forward "indigenist" forms of protest, often in religious clothing.

It seems clear that all six varieties of movements are far from uniformly antisystemic. But all six varieties have some significant antisystemic heritage, some continuing antisystemic resonance, and some further antisystemic potential. Furthermore, of course, the six varieties of movements are not entirely limited geographically to the various zones as I have indicated. One can find some trans-zone diffusion, but the geographical segregation of varieties holds true, broadly speaking, for the moment.

There are, I believe, three principal observations to make about the relation of these six varieties of (potentially, partially, historically) antisystemic movements to each other. First, at the time of the Revolution of 1968, the six varieties tended to be quite hostile to each other. This was particularly true of the relation of the "old" to the "new" variety in each zone, as we have already noted. But it was generally true more widely. That is, any one of the six varieties tended to be critical of, even hostile toward, all five other varieties. This initial, multifaced mutual hostility has tended to diminish greatly in the subsequent two decades. Today, one might speak of the six varieties of movements showing a hesitant (and still suspicious) tolerance toward each other, which is of course far short of being politically allied with each other.

Secondly, the six varieties of movements have begun tentatively to debate with each other about the strategy of social transformation. One principal issue is, of course, the desirability of seeking state power, the issue that has fundamentally divided the three "old" from the three "new" varieties of movements. Another, and derived, issue concerns the structure of organizational life. These are, to be sure, issues that had been widely debated in the 1850–1880 period, and at that time more or less resolved. They have now been reopened, and are being discussed again, now however in the light of the "real-existing" experience of state power.

Thirdly, when and if this debate on global strategy will be resolved, even if the resolution takes the form of merging the six varieties of movements into one grand worldwide family, it does not follow that there will be a unified antisystemic strategy. It has long been the case, and will continue ever more to be so, that these movements have been strongly penetrated by persons, groups, and strata whose essential hope is not the achievement of an egalitarian, democratic world but the maintenance of an inegalitarian, undemocratic one, even if one necessarily different in structure from our existing capitalist world-economy (currently in its long structural crisis). That is to say, at the end of the debate among the movements, we shall most probably see a struggle within the possibly single family of movements between the proponents of an egalitarian, democratic world and their opponents.

Lessons

What lessons are we to draw from the Revolution of 1968 and its aftermath? What lessons indeed are we to draw from more than a century of worldwide, organized antisystemic activity? Here I think the format of theses is not reasonable. I prefer to lay out the issues in the form of queries. These are queries, I hasten to add, that cannot find their answers in colloquia alone, or in the privacy of intellectual discussion. These are queries that can be answered fully only in the praxis of the multiple movements. But this praxis of course includes, as one part of it, the analyses and debates in public and in private, especially those conducted in a context of political commitment.

Query 1: *Is it possible to achieve significant political change without taking state power?*

I suppose the answer to this depends first of all on how one defines "significant." But the question is a real one nonetheless. If the Marxists won the political debate with the Anarchists in the nineteenth century, and the political nationalists won their parallel debate with the cultural nationalists, the explanation was the compelling force of one assertion that they made: Those with existing privilege will never cede it willingly, and will use their control of state violence to prevent significant change. It followed that ousting the privileged from state power was the prerequisite to significant change.

It seems quite clear that even today, in some countries (say, South Africa), there are governments representing privileged minorities that are resolutely unwilling to cede their privilege. In these countries it seems very implausible to suggest that any significant political change could occur in the absence of vigorous, and almost inevitably violent, political activity. South Africa is no doubt a quintessential instance of a state in which the majority of its citizens have never had *droit de cité* and have therefore never felt that the government was "theirs" in any sense whatsoever.

But today there is a large number of states in which the majority of the population believe that, in some sense, the government is "theirs." Most "post-revolutionary" regimes by and large enjoy this fundamental sense of popular support. This is no doubt true of the U.S.S.R. and of China, and of Algeria. But if of Algeria, is it not also true of India? And is this not true of Sweden, where fifty years of Social-Democratic regimes have "integrated" the working class into political life? And what about France, or Germany? One could go on. Each national case has its specificity. But it is surely clear that there is a very large number of states in which popular support for the state is widespread, and where therefore a struggle for the primary accession to state power has little resonance. It is probably not very useful to suggest therefore that some of these state structures are "post-revolutionary," implying that the others are "pre-revolutionary." Most of them are in the same boat in terms of degree of popular support (and popular cynicism). To repeat, this is not true in states such as South Africa, where accession to state power by the majority still remains the primary political issue. But such states today are a minority.

Indeed, is not the prime issue in many states, and perhaps most especially in those that are self-consciously "post-revolutionary," the question of achieving the control by the "civil society" over the state? Is this

not the heart of the internal political debate not only in the "socialist countries" but also in Latin America, and southern Europe, and Southeast Asia, and Black Africa? "More democracy is more socialism," says Mr. Gorbachev. But if so, what is the function of an antisystemic *movement* in the U.S.S.R.?

Query 2: *Are there forms of social power worth conquering other than "political" power?*

Obviously, there are other forms of social power – economic power, cultural power (Gramsci's "hegemony"), power over self (individual and "group" autonomy). And obviously, individuals, groups, and organizations constantly seek such kinds of power. But how does the effort to attain such power articulate with the *political* activity of antisystemic movements? In what sense will the achievement of more economic power, or more cultural power, or more power over self in fact contribute to a fundamental transformation of the world-system?

We are here before a question that has beset antisystemic movements since their outset. Is fundamental transformation the consequence of an accretion of improvements that, bit by bit and over time, create irreversible change? Or are such incremental achievements very largely a self-deception that in fact demobilize and hence preserve the realities of existing inequities? This is, of course, the "reformism-revolution" debate once again, which is larger than the constricted version of this debate symbolized by Eduard Bernstein versus Lenin.

That is to say, is there a meaningful *strategy* that can be constructed that involves the variegated pursuit of multiple forms of power? For this is what is suggested, at least implicitly, by a lot of the arguments of the new social movements that emerged in the wake of 1968.

Query 3: *Should antisystemic movements take the form of organizations?*

The creation of bureaucratic organizations as the instrument of social transformation was the great sociological invention of nineteenth-century political life. There was much debate about whether such organizations should be mass-based or cadre-based, legal or underground, one-issue or multi-issue, whether they should demand limited

or total commitment of their members. But for over a century, there has been little doubt that organizations of some kind were indispensable.

The fact that Michels demonstrated a very long time ago that these organizations took on a life of their own that interfered quite directly with their ostensible *raisons d'être* did not seem to dampen very much the enthusiasm to create still more organizations. Even the spontaneous movements of 1968 became transformed into many such organizations. This no doubt had consequences that made many of the post-1968 generation very uncomfortable, as may be seen in the acerbic debates between Fundis and Realos in the German Green movement.

The tension between the political efficacity that organizations represent and the ideological and political dangers they incarnate is perhaps unresolvable. It is perhaps something with which we simply must live. It seems to me, however, that this is a question that has to be dealt with directly and debated thoroughly, lest we simply drift into two pointless factions of the "sectarians" and the "dropouts." The numbers of individuals throughout the world who are "ex-activists" and who are now "unaffiliated" but who wish in some way to be politically active has, I believe, grown very sharply in the wake of the post-1968 letdown. I do not think we should think of this as the "depoliticization" of the disillusioned, though some of it is that. It is rather the fear that organizational activity is only seemingly efficacious. But if so, what can replace it, if anything?

Query 4: *Is there any political basis on which antisystemic movements, West and East, North (both West & East) and South, can in reality join hands?*

The fact that there are *six* varieties of antisystemic movements, an "old" and a "new" variety in each of the three different zones, seems to me no passing accident. It reflects a deep difference of political realities in the three zones. Do there exist any unifying political concerns that could give rise to a common worldwide strategy? Is there any evidence that, even if this wasn't true in the period following 1945 it is beginning to be true in the 1980s, and might be even more true in the twenty-first century?

Here we need more than pieties and wishful thinking. There has never

existed heretofore international (that is, interzonal) solidarity of any significance. And this fact has given rise to much bitterness. Three things seem to me important. One, the immediate day-to-day concerns of the populations of the three zones are today in many ways strikingly different. The movements that exist in these three zones reflect their differences. Secondly, many of the short-run objectives of movements in the three zones would, if achieved, have the effect of improving the situation for some persons in that zone at the expense of other persons in other zones. Thirdly, no desirable transformation of the capitalist world-economy is possible in the absence of trans-zonal political co-operation by antisystemic movements.

This trans-zonal cooperation would have to be both strategic and tactical. It might be easier (albeit still not easy) to establish the bases of tactical cooperation. But strategic? It is probable that strategic collaboration can only be on the basis of a profound radicalization of the objectives. For the great impediment to trans-zonal strategic collaboration is the incredible socioeconomic polarization of the existing world-system. But is there an objective (and not merely a voluntaristic) basis for such a radicalization?

Query 5: *What does the slogan, "liberty, equality, fraternity" really mean?*

The slogan of the French Revolution is familiar enough to us all. It seems to refer to three different phenomena, each located in the three realms into which we are accustomed to divide our social analyses: liberty in the political arena, equality in the economic arena, and fraternity in the socio-cultural arena. And we have become accustomed as well to debating their relative importance, particularly between liberty and equality.

The antinomy of liberty and equality seems to me absurd. I don't really understand myself how one can be "free" if there is inequality, since those who have more always have options that are not available to those who have less, and therefore the latter are less free. And similarly I don't really understand how there can be equality without liberty since, in the absence of liberty, some have more political power than others, and hence it follows that there is inequality. I am not suggesting a verbal game here but a rejection of the distinction. Liberty-equality is a single concept.

Can then fraternity be "folded into" this single concept of liberty-equality? I do not think so. I note first that fraternity, given our recent consciousness about sexist language, should now be banned as a term. Perhaps we can talk of comradeship. This brings us however to the heart of the issues raised by sexism and racism. What is their opposite? For a long time the lefts of the world preached one form or another of universalism, that is, of total "integration." The consciousness of the Revolution of 1968 has led to the assertion by those who most directly suffered from racism and sexism of the political, cultural, and psychological merits of building their own, that is separate, organizational and cultural structures. At a world level, this is sometimes called the "civilizational project."

It is correct to assert that the tensions between universalism and particularism are the product of the capitalist world-economy and are impossible to resolve within its framework. But that gives us insufficient guide for future goals or present tactics. It seems to me that the movements after 1968 have handled this issue the easy way, by swinging back and forth on a pendulum in their emphases. This leaves the issue intact as a permanent confusion and a permanent irritant. If we are to think of a trans-zonal strategy of transformation, it will have to include a fairly clear perspective on how to reconcile the thrust for homogeneity (implied in the very concept of a trans-zonal strategy) and the thrust for heterogeneity (implied in the concept of liberty-equality).

Query 6: *Is there a meaningful way in which we can have plenty (or even enough) without productivism?*

The search for the conquest of nature and the Saint-Simonian moral emphasis on productive labor have long been ideological pillars not only of the capitalist world-economy but also of its antisystemic movements. To be sure, many have worried about excessive growth, and waste, and resource depletion. But, as with other such rejections of dominant values, how far can we, should we, draw the implications of the critiques?

Once again, it is easy to say that jobs versus ecology is a dilemma produced by the current system and inherent in it. But once again, this tells us little about long-term objectives or short-term tactics. And once again, this is an issue that has profoundly divided the antisystemic movements within zones, and even more across the zones.

Concluding note

One of the principal implicit complaints of the Revolution of 1968 was that the enormous social effort of antisystemic movements over the prior one hundred years had yielded so little global benefit. In effect, the revolutionaries were saying, we are not really farther along than our grandparents were, in terms of transforming the world.

The criticism was a harsh one, no doubt a salutary one, but also an unfair one. The conditions of the world-systemic revolution of 1968 were entirely different from those of the world-systemic revolution of 1848. From 1848 to 1968, it is hard to see, retrospectively, how the antisystemic movements could have acted other than they did. Their strategy was probably the only one realistically available to them, and their failures may have been inscribed in the structural constraints within which they necessarily worked. Their efforts and their devotion were prodigious. And the dangers they averted, the reforms they imposed probably offset the misdeeds they committed and the degree to which their mode of struggle reinforced the very system against which they were struggling.

What is important, however, is not to be a Monday morning quarterback of the world's antisystemic movements. The real importance of the Revolution of 1968 is less its critique of the past than the questions it raised about the future. Even if the past strategy of the "old left" movements had been the best possible strategy for the time, the question still remained whether it was a useful strategy as of 1968. Here the case of the new movements was a far stronger one.

The new movements however have not offered a fully coherent alternative strategy. A coherent alternative strategy is still today to be worked out. It will possibly take ten to twenty more years to do so. This is not a cause for discouragement; it is rather the occasion for hard collective intellectual and political work.

Editorial note

Immanuel Wallerstein's paper was the keynote address at "1968 in Global Retrospective: A Conference on the 20th Anniversary of 1968," organized by The Humanities Institute of Brooklyn College of the City University of New York and held at the college on October

20–21, 1988. Wallerstein's paper was criticized by an international group of invited speakers who represented both intellectual commitment to the activism of 1968 and a diversity of views. They included Roslyn Baxandall, K. D. Wolff, David Caute, James Turner, Marianne Debouzy, Roxane Witke, Sebastiano Maffetone, Michele Wallace, Irena Lasota, Milan Nikolic, Mitu Hirshman, Todd Gitlin, Jim Miller, and J. Hoberman. A notable, last-minute cancellation – for urgent reasons – was Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Divided into sessions on "World Hegemony, State, Culture, and Old Left Movements," "The Key Role of 'Minority' Revolutions," "Representations of 1968," and "Towards the Future Global Perspective," the conference was cosponsored by The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Goethe House, the Cultural Services of the French Embassy, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the New York Council for the Humanities.

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