

Chapter 1 : Necessary and Unnecessary Utopias Socialist Register - Video Dailymotion

This volume of the Socialist Register points toward a very different way of thinking about the future. While rejecting schematic blueprints, this volume reasserts the need for a bold and revolutionary social imagination aimed at creating saner ways of living and more rational ways of organizing society.

Monthly Review Press, pp. Rather, having heard of it for years, I actually read it. The crisis of socialism was in full bloom for all to see. The collapse of the USSR and its bloc; the road toward capitalism by the Communist Party of China; the blatant shifts to the right by social democratic parties made it virtually impossible to ignore the gravity of the situation facing the left. In a search for new and more sophisticated answers I decided that I would annually read the Socialist Register. What I found were thought provoking, insightful essays on contemporary issues from the perspective of Marxism. There was an international flavor to each anthology with a good cross section of Marxist opinion from different parts of the world. There was also a diversity of political opinion. That is, while the authors were and assumably still are Marxists , there were differing views and approaches that were evident when reading the collections. All of these comments are relevant to Socialist Register In fact, this is probably my favorite volume so far. Restructuring, Strategy and Feminism It is difficult to review an anthology of twenty separate articles. For that reason, I will focus the balance of this essay on why I believe these themes are of such importance. This restructuring has posed grave problems for all organizers, and certainly for the left. She explores whether the de facto balkanization of the workforce inhibits the ability to develop class consciousness and, further, whether it restricts the ability to develop trade or craft consciousness. The issues contained in these articles go beyond common references to the growing feminization of the workforce. The articles speak to the continued structural oppression of women, and steps that need to be taken to address it. Additionally, the Hensman article raises the question of organizing women workers outside of the framework of traditional trade unionism. The examples she gives are important particularly insofar as they seek to address more than the workplace existence of the woman worker. Who, Where and Why? Leftists all but ignore. For too many of us, there is no land question, or, in our better moments, we fall into an economic deterministic bastardization of Marx, seeing farmers as a dying group which history will simply sweep away. Contained in these articles, however, is a different look at the land question. In the case of Chiapas, for instance, it is not only a matter of land in the abstract, but also issues of autonomy for indigenous people. It is also connecting the land question to the larger question of political power. In a different context there is the matter of Brazil and the growing landless workers movement. The character of this movement is what makes it especially interesting, as summed up in the following: The rural unemployed wanted land to plant crops. In the sprawling slums of Sao Paulo demands for work began to be transformed into calls for a plot of land where children could be brought up in safety, away from drugs and violence. The issue of land has become a matter directly relevant to the broad working class, a matter that the MST through its political leadership insists on keeping in the fore. Imperialism and Solidarity Beverly J. As many commentators have pointed out, discussions about globalization have often obscured the basic question of imperialism. The authors here reassert the importance of understanding imperialism, but they go further. Put another way, there is a tendency among many leftists and progressives to ignore the continued existence of national questions and national oppression on a global scale. The irony of our current situation is that the material conditions for international working class solidarity "proletarian internationalism" are greater now than probably at any point in history. At the same time, imperialism, through its current manifestation in what we call globalization, has not oppressed everyone equally. The global South is still at a decided disadvantage. This situation raises important strategic questions for the left. Some global Southern governments as well as various global Southern mass movements see social clauses as global Northern protectionism. Yet, if this is the case, how can workers in the global North both protect themselves against the ravages of the multinational corporations while at the same time expressing concrete solidarity with the global South? These are issues that are flagged and must be further debated. The articles here help to advance that debate and are more than thought-provoking. Organizing on the Buses of L. I would call attention to two of

the articles not to dismiss the others: This is not to suggest that working class struggles are pure and that non-working class activists contaminate them. Rather, as Greenfield offers: This ideological phenomenon has arisen as a critique of socialist practice and the failures of socialist experiments in the 20th century. In this regard it is important and genuine socialists should consider the critique. This is not a critique of the value of NGOs by any stretch of the imagination. Rather, as Greenfield points out, the left must take to heart the notion that the emancipation of the working class must be an activity led by the working class. Strategic Observations Panitch concludes the volume with a series of observations about strategy. Very appropriately tying together the various strands within SR, he makes note of several important considerations. Particularly critical are discussions of the importance of organization; strategy which goes outside of the capitalist box; and the need for profound internationalism. The question of organization, particularly an organization that represents the political left, is critical. If we are to stand in opposition to those who would attempt to substitute themselves for the oppressed, then we on the Left must advance a project to build an anti-capitalist organization of the oppressed. Second, our strategies, including when we are successful in achieving power, whether in trade unions or elected political office, must seek to transcend the box in which capitalism puts us. On the necessity for profound internationalism, Panitch reminds us that internationalism is not something that is simply a moral code but is something that needs to be practiced. We leftists must be thinking AND acting both globally and locally. As the material conditions linking the oppressed become clearer and clearer, and as the necessity to courageously oppose imperialism in its different manifestations confronts us, proletarian internationalism becomes not another good idea, but a concrete necessity. After completing my reading there were only five words which came to mind, borrowing of course from the good Chairman: Get articles and upcoming events delivered every month.

Chapter 2 : The Left's Crisis | Envisioning a Post-Capitalist Order

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Why are you bailing the banks out? Let them go under. This kind of response was, of course, utterly irresponsible, with no thought given to what would happen to the savings of workers, let alone to the paychecks deposited into their bank accounts, or even to the fact that what was at stake was the roofs over their heads. On the other hand, the even more common response was all about asserting state responsibility: This crisis is the result of the government not having done its duty: But this response was in fact fundamentally misleading. The United States has the most regulated financial system in the world by far if you measure it in terms of the number of statutes on the books, the number of pages of administrative regulation, the amount of time and effort and staff that is engaged in the supervision of the financial system. But that system is organized in such a way as to facilitate the financialization of capitalism, not only in the U. Without this, the globalization of capitalism in recent decades would not have been possible. From financialisation of the economy to the socialisation of finance. A small step for the lawyers, a huge step for mankind. But you do have to be a Marxist to understand that this is not going to happen by bringing some lawyers into a room and signing a few documents. What Buter was putting forward was the technocratic notion of how reform happens. But fundamental change can only really happen through a massive class struggle, which would involve a massive transformation of the state itself. Build Socially Useful Commodities A second socialist reason for nationalizing the banks would be to transform the uses to which finance is put. Where I come from in Canada, the backbone of the southern Ontario economy, apart from banking, is the automobile industry. A banking system that was turned into a public utility would be centrally involved in transforming the uses to which credit is put, so those skills could be put to building wind turbines, so they could be used to develop the kind of equipment we need to harness solar energy cheaply rather than expensively. We cannot even begin to think seriously about solving the ecological crisis that coincides with this economic crisis without the left returning to an ambitious notion of economic planning. The allocation of credit is at the core of economic planning for the conversion of industry. Now, people often say that socialists in the last 20 or 30 years have not laid out a programmatic vision. As the Socialist Register volume on Necessary and Unnecessary Utopias showed, there were more writings on what a future socialism would look like in the last two decades of the 20th century than probably ever before. But the detailed pictures of a socialist order they painted "whether involving some combination of plan and market or participatory economic planning" have been exceedingly sketchy on two crucial things. One is immediate demands and reforms. And the other is how the hell would we get there. What are the vehicles? What are the agencies? How are the vehicles connected to building the agencies? People need to be mobilized by immediate demands, as they were by the demands for trade union rights, a reduced workweek, a public educational system a welfare state, etc. Some 15 years ago, when the FMLN in El Salvador after the settlement of the civil war turned itself from a guerrilla army into a political party, I was one of the people invited to help them set up a party school. He said to me, everybody thinks that the long term is the next election, which since this was in would have been in there. What we have to hope is that by we will be strong enough, have a strong enough base, to be able to make a decent showing in the next election. The long-term is , when we will be able to get elected as a government that can actually do something, that can transform the state. Immediate Demands and Longer-Term Vision So one needs to figure out how to combine a clear, ambitious sense of immediate demands with this longer-term vision. The case for this could have been made in terms of the need for a massive program for public housing. Well, you should be careful what you hope for. One of the effects of winning those demands was a channeling of those communities more deeply into the structures of finance, the most dynamic sector of neoliberal capitalism. And then Bush, of course, let every crook that he could find into the mortgage business. But you need to understand the dynamics and contradictions that are involved in trying to win reforms for people through integrating them more deeply into capitalist credit relations. And the results are now clear. We should be also demanding universal public pensions, as the private pension plans won by trade unions now are coming

unraveled for both public sector and private sector workers. And that would contribute to strengthening the working-class, because it would eliminate the kind of competition amongst workers that employers have played on with their private pensions. We should also be calling for free public transit to be available like public libraries, public education and public health care. All of this involves trying to take a crucial portion of what we need for our livelihood, our basic needs, and decommodify them as far as possible within capitalism. People respond positively to such demands even in North America. So you come back fairly quickly to the need to at least begin a process of socialization through taking the banks into the public sector. We need to try to see this moment of crisis from the perspective of what openings it could create. The limitations of a purely defensive response to the crisis lie in not taking advantage of the opportunity that the crisis creates. This is, oddly enough, one of the limits of a perspective that says you can change the world without taking power, without engaging on the terrain of the state, without transforming the structures of the state. What is on the agenda is mainly to prevent the state doing certain things and what is off the agenda is to change the state in such a way that ensures that when new progressive reforms are won they lead on to further structural reforms. We need to appreciate the reasons for the anti-statism that is so on the Left today; the suspicion of talking in terms of building new parties or transforming the state is understandable. But we need to go beyond protest, or we will be trapped forever in organizing the next demo. And as this current crisis is transferred down to the regional and local levels, which every central state will try to do, we will run up against the limits of what can be secured in struggles at those levels. We have to learn how defensive and localized struggles can be linked up, and how they can be transformed so they are directed into a struggle for state power. Capitalism can only go on so long with the private sector being as limited in its unionization, its density being so low, in terms of collective bargaining rights and recognition, and the public sector being almost universally unionized. Part of the onslaught on state expenditure that is taking place now is to destroy public sector trade unionism. The ability of public sector unions to resist in this crisis is being very severely tested. Speaking more generally, it is increasingly clear that trade unions, as they evolved through the 20th century, not only in the advanced capitalist countries, also in most of the countries of the South, are no longer capable of being more than defensive. They are not able to win new gains, and they are not able to organize in ways that develop the capacities of their members. The challenge now is to build a trade unionism that is actually a class organization, one that goes beyond organizing people by the workplace alone and organizes people in relation to the many facets of their lives touched by this crisis. His most recent book is *In and Out of Crisis*:

Chapter 3 : Minimum Utopia: Ten Theses by Norman Geras

The Socialist Register is a socialist journal published annually. It was founded in by Ralph Miliband and John Calenderdelascience.com had criticisms of the New Left Review after Perry Anderson became editor of the NLR in

Ten Theses From Socialist Register, I Offer here Some Reflections on utopia. I make no extravagant claim for them. They do not trace out a history of the concept, nor do they attempt to explore its thematic range and variety. I have arranged them into ten summary theses. Socialism is Utopian As a goal socialism is, and it always has been, utopian, including in its most influential version to date, namely Marxism. Everyone knows that in this sense the Marxist tradition sought from the beginning to be resolutely, anti-utopian. Re-read the relevant passages from the Manifesto. This is, too, what its numberless detractors have most deeply begrudged it. For, whatever the changing fortunes of the movement for socialism, taken all in all there is still no more compelling theory of society than historical materialism, even once all the necessary qualifications to it have been made. Notwithstanding any of this, however, it remains true that from the outset socialism was utopian. It was a distant land, another moral universe. It was radically other vis-a-vis the order of things it aspired to replace. And that is what it still is. A society beyond exploitation is in the realm of the ideal. Furthermore, so far from being any kind of inevitability, its achievement is an unsolved problem and "not to beat about the bush" the very possibility of it is in question. In this way socialism partakes also of one of the pejorative meanings of utopia. Until its realisation establishes otherwise, it partakes of the meaning of being an unattainable ideal. We may hope that it can be achieved, but we do not yet know that it can. Nor do we yet know how. We should Unashamedly Embrace Utopia We should be, without hesitation or embarrassment, utopians. At the end of the twentieth century it is the only acceptable political option, morally speaking. I shall not dwell on this. I will merely say that, irrespective of what may have seemed apt hitherto either inside or outside the Marxist tradition, nothing but a utopian goal will now suffice. The realities of our time are morally intolerable. Within the constricted scope of the present piece, I suppose I might try to evoke a little at least of what I am referring to here, with some statistics or an imagery of poverty, destitution and other contemporary calamities- But I do not intend to do even this much. The facts of widespread human privation and those of political oppression and atrocity are available to all who want them. They are unavoidable unless you wilfully shut them out. To those who would suggest that things might be yet worse, one answer is that of course they might be. But another answer is that for too many people they are already quite bad enough; and the sponsors of this type of suggestion are for their part almost always pretty comfortable. There have been Two Ingredients of Socialist Utopia I distinguish from within the Marxist tradition two broad elements of the socialist vision, which, simplifying, I style maximum and minimum, ingredients. Informing discussions of the socialist future there has been, on the one hand, a dream or promise of ultimate liberation, one not generally filled out in very much detail but present nevertheless in certain pregnant words and phrases. One should take care not to exaggerate. The influential thinkers of Marxism were serious people, not fools. They did not expect heaven on earth. Still, the image was there of a condition of uncoerced social peace and of free and ample individual self-realisation, with the sign against it of the radically, the incomparably different. But as in a fundamentally new beginning, the self-conscious history of humankind as opposed to a previously opaque prehistory. It was contained in the socialist demand for a release from extreme want and toil, a demand based on the elementary fact which pro-capitalist liberals typically disguise from or soften for themselves that the possibility, of individual flourishing is seriously undermined by poverty and grave need, as it is by the tedium of a lifetime of unwanted forms of labour. Within, or perhaps behind, any greater was this more modest objective: Might each member of our species one day rise to the level of an Aristotle, a Goethe or a Marx? Maximum Notions of Utopia have their Indispensable Place People will continue to long for what may be beyond their reach. Yearnings of this kind are merely the other face of finitude and limitation, of the regular troubles and the harsher oppressions of the world. As, in the normal way of things, fear of death, protracted pain or illness, close bereavement; and loneliness, disappointed love, personal betrayal or other inner hurts; more generally, excessive burdens and wretched long-term predicaments, are a cause of suffering, so do they

also prompt ideas of a release from it. Here the reconstructive capacities of human thought – abstraction, projection, imagination – can always move through various levels of conceivable improvement right up to the furthest negation. Hence, eternal life, ultimate redemption and the like, as well as some of the more common fictions of many a personal existence. Hence, the most ambitious utopias. At the same time, elements of the transcendent are lodged within mundane experience, thereby nourishing in a more positive way, too, visions of a radically different human realm. For if the extraordinary is already within the ordinary, why may it not be extended? And why may it not be extended again? Great art – or just good music, of all kinds – could be invoked at this point to exemplify the way in which the aesthetic, the elevating or powerfully affective, inhabits the quotidian world. But another less often used example demonstrates as tellingly how even within the ordinary, at the most seemingly unremarkable sites, there are moments of grace, joy and excitement capable of lifting those present and transmuting the quality of their experience. I refer to the example of modern sport, not much reflected on in meditations about Utopia. It is a mistaken neglect, in my own view, since sport today gives as much genuine and memorable pleasure to millions upon millions of people as can be claimed for most other human pursuits. In the unexceptional context of what are no more than idle games, and for all of the accompanying ugliness currently to be found there – abusively exaggerated hatreds, boorishness, the corruptions of a rampantly invasive commodification – there is a communal enjoyment of competitive effort, and there are feats of impressive, sometimes breath-taking skill, and uniquely specific moments of great beauty under pressure not reproducible in any other setting. This is on top of the more common enjoyments of time passed shooting the breeze with friends. James already said it many years ago: But from both kinds of cause, whether the psychological and moral needs arising from suffering, or possibilities faintly discerned within the lived experience of the real, we will continue to long for what may be beyond our reach. We not only will continue to, we also should. For, set against this wider human-natural background, maximum notions of utopia can be seen to have their value. This value is the very dream of deliverance. It is in the liberating fantasy that yields a different vantage point from the one confining its and claiming the privilege, all too often, of being the sole realistic reality. We have to think about the seemingly impossible in order to be able to discriminate what is generally possible. There are few things as bizarre anyway, as Terry Eagleton observes elsewhere in this volume, as the futurist vision trapped within assumptions of a putative realism. Politically, We should be Guided as Socialists by the Aim of Minimum Utopia These above considerations notwithstanding, the political thought of socialism should now be centred, not on notions of ultimate liberation or of other too distant ambition, but on a world cured of its worst remediable deprivations and horrors. The goal should be modest or minimum utopia. This is a thesis I have suggested in passing once before in the pages of Socialist Register, defining minimum utopia as a form of society which could generally provide for its members the material and social bases of a tolerably contented existence, or put otherwise from which the gravest social and political evils familiar to us have been removed. The first and most important of these is simply that, could it but be achieved, minimum utopia would be a remarkable good in itself. To me the most compelling thing in Marxism – along with the broad truth of historical materialism – has always been, not its most far-reaching perspective, but its most basic one. Today more than ever it provides a good enough vision to be getting on with. The world as it is and as it has been presents us with a picture of cruelty, slaughter, gross forms of exploitation and oppression, dire need. Even to articulate the thought is to bring home how remote this objective is. But why should any human being have to settle for less? Remote therefore as it may be, it is indeed the minimum, even while being utopia in a more than powerful enough meaning of the concept. To have only this: Note that insisting on minimum utopia as a political guideline, a sufficient practical objective, does not in itself entail any renunciation of the more maximal ingredients of the socialist vision. These can either wait, or some of them may take care of themselves more or less. Others may turn out to have been misconceived. The question can just be left open. Relatively, it is of less importance. A second reason is that we should not frame our projection of possible futures in terms that exclude the less benign, the more troublesome, features of the human make-up as it has revealed itself historically. Since I have argued this point before at length, I will be brief about it here. It is not a matter of denying the extent to which human beings can and do change – individually, historically,

culturally "nor the scope there might be, consequently, for a radically different human type, with different social and moral traits, in the dwellings and on the streets of a better future world. It is only a matter of cautioning against a too presumptive optimistic in this regard: For it comes to us from the two extremes of reflection about the social world, both from thinking about utopia itself and from thinking about the lowest depths humanity has sunk to, that we cannot fully comprehend an idea of perfect or complete happiness, let alone deliberately aim for it. This is why pure utopias can seem so flat and dull, whatever the intentions of those designing them. They lack the necessary contrasts that in any actual world make the goods of life what they are, to be valued and striven for against the basis. It is a point that was argued by George Orwell in a pseudonymous essay about notions of utopian recently traced to his authorship: Our ever-insufficient knowledge of the future opposes it: The certainty of death opposes it: The inevitable material cares oppose it: And if the most immediate cause of stress comes to an end, you are grievously amazed to see that another one lies behind; and in reality a whole series of others. The point is only to get more sharply into focus that it is eliminating those evils, or levelling them as far as we can, that should be the prime contemporary objective of socialist thought and politics, and this does not require any whitened vision of a future existence frankly unrecognisable to us, if it is indeed desirable. Enough, for now, the known and more easily imaginable forms of human fulfilment. Minimum utopia, as here envisaged, entails so fundamental a transformation of the existing structures of economic wealth and power and of the distributional norms relating to need, effort and reward that it is revolutionary in scope. This must be made explicit against an argument I anticipate roughly as follows: For the achievements of capitalism, it will be said, and the reforms it has already accommodated, when set against the disasters witnessed in this century under the banner of socialism, make capitalism the better ground for minimum utopian aspirations. Different lines of response are possible here, among which these. It in no way minimises the moral and political calamities for which the left broadly, and despite its litany currents and subdivisions "is answerable, to say that capitalism and its apologists are answerable for as much and of their own. Second, the presentation of this socioeconomic form, virtually always by well-shod beneficiaries of it, in the guise of achievement and reformability is a piece of rank complacency that should be a cause for shame.

Chapter 4 : Socialist Register: Necessary Utopias : Leo Panitch :

He was a member of the Movement for an Independent and Socialist Canada, , the Ottawa Committee for Labour Action, , the Canadian Political Science Association, the Committee of Socialist Studies, the Marxist Institute and the Royal Society of Canada.

Consequently, when customary landowners used industrial sabotage to close the mine in , this regional dispute soon transformed into a major national crisis. Extra-judicial killings, forced displacement, the internment of civilians, and the denial of humanitarian aid, were just some of the egregious tactics employed by the military. No one was exempted from the violence. Both organisations provided considerable assistance. As a result of these joint efforts, approximately 10, to 15, people were killed on Bougainville. In the following case study you will be exposed to the calculations, relations, and decisions that led two democratic states and a major multinational mining corporation, to organise a systematic campaign of state violence that terrorised the residents of Bougainville for almost a decade. Video Text 1 Chapter 2: However, it is clans who own the land which mining companies must access to extract the minerals and build essential facilities. In order to press home this customary power, clan groups in the Bougainville mine area organised themselves through the Panguna Landowners Association PLA. Between and the PLA helped landowners to increase their share of the benefits being generated by the mine see Okole However, in August , a new PLA executive was elected. Led by Francis Ona and Perpetua Serero, this executive had a radical political agenda. The PLA was advised that a legislated seven yearly review of the agreement due that year would be the most appropriate forum for voicing any concerns over the operation. The new Prime Minister, Rabbie Namaliu, ordered an independent inquiry into the mining operation during August. In response, the PLA decided to escalate their anti-mine activities. Expecting a sympathetic ear, Cornelius was shocked to discover that the government in fact blamed BCL for the recent disturbances on Bougainville. Indeed the Ministers told Cornelius, more needed to be done for local communities. The meeting ended on a sour note. Perry informed Cornelius that at around Moreover, a number of influential Ministers genuinely believed that the campaign of sabotage was a cry for help by landowners. As a result, while police mobile squads were dispatched and placed on security detail, the Prime Minister also elected to send a peace delegation to Bougainville in an effort to forge a mediated settlement to the crisis. BCL was profoundly disappointed with this decision. They believed this would set a destructive precedent, illustrating that force could produce results. Mobile squads raided four landowner villages, landowners were assaulted, their property seized, and their homes damaged. Video Text 3 During early unrest on Bougainville grew as militants began to attack the property of local businessman. Meanwhile heightening tensions between Bougainvilleans and mainland PNG migrants led to riots in several towns. Fearing negative exposure, the national government banned the media from entering Bougainville. The government offered the moderates a generous peace settlement if they could persuade villagers to withdraw their support for the more radical PLA executive. On the 28 April , Francis Ona Only then we will be able to save the lives of our people in Bougainville – Please be united and walk side by side. Forget about your differences and struggle for only one goal: A Counterinsurgency Campaign Begins In an effort to press the independence question the BRA stepped up its attacks on the mine during May , forcing its closure. Ted Diro, the Minister of State, and Ben Sabumei, the Minister for Defence, persuaded their cabinet colleagues that a state of emergency must be declared, and the BRA neutralised using military force. It was no longer a land compensation issue nor a tribal conflict. This they hoped would allow the mine to be repaired, while the BRA was gradually neutralised. However, the PNGDF lacked the operational capacity to undertake this extensive military campaign alone. PNGDF soldiers also began to experiment with the use of mortars on civilian areas, including white phosphorous rounds.

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Chapter 7 : Monthly Review | Socialist Register Necessary and Unnecessary Utopias

This book reasserts the need for a bold and revolutionary social imagination, one aimed at saner ways of living and more rational ways of organising society.

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