

***ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE -  
THE SLOGAN OF A NEW MILLENUM***

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*In modern situation, which is so much different from what was in the 60s,  
what does it mean to you to be radical?*

Radical means to go to the root, and if you look at the root of the world problems, than to be radical would mean to look at international structures of corporate domination. The reality of our time is increasing domination by corporations. Corporations control the world's natural resources. Giant corporations, like "Exxon", have more ships than Great Britain. Corporations control international production, whether we are talking about production in South Korea, Malaysia, Japan, US - we are talking about a very large entity which has been created by millions of people over hundreds of years. But the resources are controlled by a very tiny percent of world's population. If we want to understand why the world's resources are used for the military, why does US spend so much on military - a million dollars a minute of every day of every week, we look at this question of resources. US has five percent of the world's population, consumes more than 50% of the world's resources. Why does US have troops in 141 countries? Why is it expanding its military operations? Clearly, to keep control over the world's resources. There's no other reason.

*So what is the root of the evil, which needs to be changed? What is the initial problem? You mentioned corporate control. I assume corporate control is the fruit of the existing economic system. So to go to the root means changing the principle of the existing economic system, am I right?*

Correct. I think we can't assume that the changes we want to make should apply to every person. For example, a family owns a restaurant. It is so very different from "Exxon". And, in my view, principles can't be applied universally. What we can say is that the giant concentrations of capital have to be brought into socially acceptable means of control. Like, a trillion-dollar agglomeration wealth should be controlled with the benefit of human beings, not for the profit of corporation's stockholders. So in my view it is perfectly acceptable if someone is a millionaire. What is not acceptable is for the giant corporations to control social wealth, what Marx called Gesamtkapital.

*And what can be the means to regain this social control? How do you imagine the instruments of such control?*

There has to be a very long period of transition. We can't jump overnight into a perfect system. In anti-globalization movement there are many people, so-called reformists, who believe we can reform IMF, the World Bank and WTO, and such reforms would lead to a better justice. One of the best examples of such efforts, in my mind, is the campaign for debt forgiveness called Jubilee. It struggled for all international debts of the world's poorest countries to be forgiven in the year 2000. There are many groups who lobbied for the interests of the poorest countries in the world, who simply can't pay their debts. This is a great idea and a great plan, and it should be supported. The problem is that in the long run these countries would acquire more debts and they would have no means of development unless there is a radical restructuring of the economic relationships. Now, in 1970 in the US, the Black Panther Party gathered together 15 000 people, who together drafted a new constitution for US. One of the provisions for this constitution of this constitution was that the US should repay to the countries of the world, collectively, for their exploitation. For example, African countries should be repaid for the African slave trade. Vietnam has never been paid reparations. The list of countries where the US has intervened and used their wealth is a very long list indeed. So I think that principle is fundamentally correct.

*Ok, I'll try now to mention the arguments of the opposite camp. "The Economist", for example, says that the problems of the world poverty are not increased but decreased by globalization. The poorest countries of the world have their problems not in the least because of their corrupted local governments. No matter how much money is given and for-given to them, this money is ultimately stolen by the local elites. They had a list of the world's poorest countries, when people actually starve to death, African countries, like Sudan and others, and all of them are not involved in globalization, on the contrary, they are closed, and the wealth is distributed among the heads of clans or groups. The argument is that it's no use to give money to failed governments and corrupted national elites, until such countries become opener to the outer world, establishing some common standards of democracy and control, becoming transparent, so that the West clearly sees where the money goes. The same thing happened to Russia in 90s when so much money from the IMF simply disappeared somewhere.*

I hear two different points made here. The first is the notion that globalization helps poor people. I think the record speaks for itself: The IMF has demanded austerity program, consisting of different conditions. On the top of the list is always that the governments of the countries end subsidies for basic food. In Mexico, for example, the price for tortillas, rice, beans and milk had to be raised. Whom does this hurt? And in whose interests is such a plan? Essentially what globalization advocates are saying is that the people who can't afford buying basic food should be prepared to starve in the name of the social good. In order for the society to advance the poorest must simply die. As Kofi Anan recently reminded us, 24,000 people starve to death every day in the world, and it's in the situation when the world has never produced so much food, when in the United States tens of billions of dollars are paid to farmers every year NOT to produce anything, because otherwise the price would be so low that the farmers would go out of business. This is an irrational situation.

The second point is, like "The Economist" says, why do we need to give funds to corrupt governments? They are only going to benefit a few people. But again I would pose a question, if we live in the country that suffers from huge foreign debt and our creditors say, ok, you don't have to pay interest on this money, whom is it going to help? Yes, in the short-run, certainly, those elite groups who are managing the country's ability to pay debts will have more money at their disposal. But so will people in the country, who are being taxed and otherwise, have funds taken from them to pay that interest. They will also benefit. So I think it's a very strange argument that "The Economist" names. They are very well aware that the IMF, WTO and the World Bank's managers hurt the poorest of the poor when they impose the austerity plans for countries to have debt rescheduled. And, in fact, I think many people have become convinced of the need for debt release for the poorest countries. But, I think, we can intervene on a different level. Instead of saying, "we are going to forgive debt", which international institutions are perfectly capable of, what if they said, "We are not going to allow these countries to buy weapons". Then by not incurring future debts and by having social resources, these governments will use this money for non-military purposes. Why don't they simply legislate that? It seems to me, the answer is obvious. Who benefits from military spending? It's giant corporations, like Boeing. The function of the international institutions is to benefit these multinational corporations. You asked me about being a radical, but I don't think you have to be a radical to understand this problem. In fact, you might know studies like "The Limits to Growth". Scientists used a computer to model the world system, and basically, what the MIT people concluded was this: in a situation of finite resources, and our planet is finite, can there be the

unlimited growth? The answer was: not in terms of the kind of growth that the capitalist system and its corporations demand. If you're the president of Coca-Cola you must make higher profit and higher rate of profit each year. That's what your shareholders demand. Can this situation continue indefinitely? Can Intel produce more chips? Can Coca-Cola sell more soda, can Nike sell more shoes? Is this process rational? And the MIT computer scientists, who are no radicals, concluded: this will break down. They actually predicted specific years according to their model, in which the system will break down, as far as I remember, it was 2032. I don't believe in the precision of models, but in the trend that the model was pointing to, there is a big problem, which non-radicals also realize. That is one of the reasons why we have now great movements to reform the international institutions of capital control.

The question is: can they succeed? One direction of thought is that the United Nations should become stronger to reduce world's conflicts, perhaps to eliminate world's conflicts. That's a great dream, that not only weapons of mass destruction will be banned throughout the world, but also all weapons will be banned. The 500-kilogram bomb, which is not considered a weapon of mass destruction, also should be banned. Land mines should be banned. Not only the means of biological, chemical or nuclear warfare, but all kinds of warfare should be banned. After all, it's governments who sanction the production of weapons. In my opinion, because individual governments control the United Nations, they would never agree to end their power to make war. The function of the individual governments, particularly, as you know, in the Security Council, where countries have vetoes, is simply not to allow the UN to become the absolute legislator. In this case, we need another way, and only a popular movement all over the world can create such a change. Then fighting militarism would in itself be radical in terms of the world system, possibly a revolutionary change, because if arms were banned, we can envision overnight that many of the world's problems disappear. Yes, without militarism there would be a great depression—all the more reason why we need a whole new system!

*But socially, where from do you expect such a popular movement to appear? If we take America and Western Europe, the level of life is so high there, people are in general content with their governments. If they are discontented, then not to such extent as to go in the streets and protest. Well, en masse, I mean. If we take the countries of the third world, people there are busy with earning their daily bread, moreover, most of them are not educated enough to understand where the evil comes from. So, where do you think is that moving power for such a popular movement?*

I think if we look at the history of the past fifty years we'll find a new phenomenon. And it's the sudden appearance of massive movements that compel change. Haiti was dominated by Duvalier family, and then suddenly - the Duvalier family had to flee to France. If we look at the shah of Iran, who was imposed on Iran by the US, he appeared very stable, but suddenly - he was compelled to leave. If we look at the emergence of peace movements in Europe in early 80s - Europe was very stable. Then - all of a sudden there were hundreds of thousands people in the streets. And if we look, for instance, after the Kwangju uprising, in East Asia there appeared lots of democracy movements - the Philippines in 86, South Korea again - 87, Taiwan -87, Burma - 88, China - 89, Thailand - 92, Nepal, Indonesia, and these movements fed upon each other. Similarly look at the way the uprisings in Eastern Europe spread in the late 80s, when Gorbachev announced he would not keep them by force in the Soviet block. These are instances of the phenomenon I call the Eros effect. It's not a general strike, it's not an insurrection, it's when masses of people come out in the streets and stay until certain changes are made. That is one level on which I see the possibilities.

The other level, which is what we call an objective level, is that the system is its worst enemy. We've just talked about the August crisis of 1998 in Russia, and it was not just limited to Russia, the same happened in Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, and many countries. This is the characteristic of the existing system. It is not an accidental phenomenon that will not incur again. Look at the fate of Argentina today. Argentina has been completely impoverished, overnight. It used to be the one of the richest countries of Latin America, and now it's one of the poorest, although it is impossible to predict on what level Argentina will re-emerge from its current situation. I expect such crises to become even more relevant in the world. These are the products of the corporate system, the products of the system of globalization. The advocates of globalization say: we will stabilize the countries. But look at the records. Look at the Asian crisis, look at Argentina, at Russia, look at the inability to deal with the AIDS problem in the world. Where are the advocates of globalization today talking about these problems? They ignore them. To them they are blips on the radar screen that appear momentarily and fade away. But from my point of view, these are fundamental components of the irrational structure of the world economy.

*Speaking about this antimilitary movement, don't you think that after September the 11<sup>th</sup> and the proclaimed war on terrorism it has found itself in a tough situation when anyone now who is against military expenses*

*might be considered a supporter of terrorists. And there is also another problem. I read your article on co-existence with Islamic fundamentalism, and though I'm not a big fan of the war against terrorism Mr. Bush is leading now all over the world, I can't see the possible way out myself. Your idea of co-existence with Islamic fundamentalism seems to me a bit utopian. I may lack information, but I've heard a few Bin Laden's interviews, and also interviews with Islamic radicals all over the world, and in my opinion they would not at all be content with withdrawal of American troops from Saudi Arabia and creation of the Palestinian state, I'm sure they would go farther. In London at meeting of British radical Islamic groups the slogan was: "The law of sharia to UK". It reminds me of an uncontrolled spread of passionate energy, in the terminology of a Russian visionary scientist Lev Gumilev, all over the world. Rationally I can't see the grounds on which we can live peacefully with people who fight for the rule of sharia all over the world.*

Well, these are huge questions, compared to which the problems of reforming the world economic system would seem very simple. First of all, in the United States it's not quite so black and white, that anyone against military is pro-Bin Laden. Perhaps, it will become such, and it's very often near that already. For example, when my article "Co-existence with Islamic Fundamentalism" was circulated, many people said to me, "Oh, you support Bin Laden. It's in the tone of your article, you give these people some dignity". And I said, "Well, these people have their own dignity". And they said - "Oh, you see, you're a Bin Laden supporter". My answer was, "Ok, if that's the way you want to see things in the world, that's your problem". And I say the same about Islamic fundamentalists: if they choose to live by the rule of the Koran - that's their problem. I think there are no absolute values that we must impose on the rest of the world. Does it mean that some people can kill everyone in the world and we should simply tolerate them? No, there are certain limits. What I'm saying is - if a group of people chooses to live according to their own ethics, norms, values and institutions, whether their model is Koran, the Bible, whatever, the Old Testament, the Torah, that's their decision. Groups should have their right for such decisions. That's why I'm saying I'm an autonomist. I believe groups should have their right to determine their way of life. In South Africa very interesting things happened. We know of course, that the South African apartheid regime appeared very stable and because of the international pressures and other dynamics it was compelled to change. Nelson Mandela went from prison to presidency. Mandela was compelled to make a choice here. Many white groups said: we don't want emigration, we don't choose to live with blacks, we want our own white homelands. What was Mandela's decision? He just said: "Ok, there's

enough land in South Africa, go to these lands, have your own way. I'm not going to force you to live according to the majority's way of life of racial integration". And in fact there are today white homelands for such people. And I think that's the model that any social order needs to understand: a dictatorship of the majority is still a dictatorship. Groups should have their right live according to their own way. It's much more difficult, of course, in a country where the government says you must live according to the Koran. You know, if you are a woman in Saudi Arabia, you cannot drive a car. I think it's a Saudi Arabian problem, and I'm sure that the women of Saudi Arabia will change that. There is no doubt in my mind, that if women of Saudi Arabia will not accept it, they will find ways to change the society. It's their social development. The other problem you're raising is what about the idea that they should convert everyone to Islam. This is a major problem, and as you know, there can be involuntary conversions as well. That of course is completely unacceptable, and the idea of sharia for London as a whole is absurd. However, if Islamic people in London choose to live according to those values, they should be permitted to do so.

*I'm afraid I can't agree with you on this, because what you suggest could be realistic if such autonomous communities do not communicate with each other and live 100% autonomously from the outer world. But today the world can't live according to the rules of early feudal system, with many independent communities with different rules. I'll tell you an example I myself witnessed in London. I was in a double-decker bus, and an Islamic woman entered wearing that black piece of cloth covering her face, and the driver wouldn't let her in, because he wanted to see her face to compare it with the one on her monthly bus pass. She refused and there was a ten minutes row. This is a funny example, but it shows the difficulties these autonomous societies with their own rules of life would suffer when they communicate with the outer world.*

It's a humorous example. There can be an easy solution to this. That is every bus should have a male and a female driver or attendant, because a female can show her face to a female, according to strictly fundamentalist versions of Islam. You would thereby create jobs, and solve the problem. If we think creatively we can find solutions to these problems, because what's essential is freedom. Of course there are other problems to which we won't find such easy solutions, but I'm sure that 90% of such problems would be just technical.

*Well, let's change the subject. I'm very interested in your general impression about Russian social movements and the activists that you met here.*

In terms of the movement, I didn't expect the movement to be so ideologically anarchist. Many activists I met are strongly and firmly committed to the ideology of anarchism, its name, its label, and its identity. For myself, I understand it, and yet I don't identify with it. Because it seems to me, it's like a cookbook, where you should accept recipes in terms of making the meal. As anarchism developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even the name was given to it by centralist tendencies of the First International, by Karl Marx among others. Anarchists had originally called themselves federalists, meaning that they were against centralized political control of the international association. Today we need new ways to understand the world, and one of them is not to have a cookbook. Many people in Russia ask me questions and I answer: "I don't know". I think it's a very important phrase for all of us to learn, to be able to say. In my view, one of the truly interesting people in history, Socrates, who is considered one of the wisest men of ancient Greece, used to say: "I know more than most people because I know one thing - I know nothing". And I think that's a very good attitude to begin with, to simply say: "We don't have all the answers, we don't know everything". People themselves need to find these answers. And if you call yourself an anarchist because you're against governments, you are against militarized nation-states. If that's how you want to label yourself, that's your choice. Many people have called me an anarchist, including the FBI. But I personally don't identify with that label.

*What kind of lessons did the Soviet experience of revolution, the seventy years period of totalitarian regime, give for counter-cultural social movements?*

Well, the main lesson is that the global system has its strongest links. Lenin said, that Russia is the weakest link, and we can break the weakest point. But I think that we've seen revolutions in Russia, China, Vietnam, Korea, many places, and the global system has only strengthened. So it must be changed from within. It is very important that the change from within should come from the wealthiest countries. Secondly, I think the idea of a vanguard party that imposes its will by force on the majority of other people and prohibits other parties has been relegated to the dustbin of history. I hope so. I know there are still many groups in the United States that model themselves on the Leninist principles: Trotskyists, Maoists, and others. I think that notion is very destructive to initiative from the grass roots, to people creating specific community, creating their own ideas on what's appropriate.

*You are the editor of the magazine called "New Political Science". Can you briefly explain what's new in the political science you deal with?*

New political science in the sense that we understand it was founded some twenty-five years ago. And the idea is dual. First to study phenomena that had not been studied before in political science, for example, social movements. Secondly, our idea is that political science should not be a value-free dogmatically based science, but should have ethical principles. In that sense it would be a new political science, in the sense of how Marcuse talks about a new science.

*Do you see any chance for social movements to become a political force, incorporating in the existing political systems, like forming new parties, or do you think it is completely impossible? Can street politics be the only way of struggle?*

Well, I think both the extremes are present in the anti-globalization movement. In the countries like Greece, even the church is the part of anti-globalization movement. In the US there is a green party, with elements within close to anti-globalists. But entrance into a national government by any political party means acceptance of the existing order and hierarchy. Many governments are benefiting from Greens' participation. I don't see any governments totally against globalization. The most hard-line government in the world - the North Korean - is now trying to become the part of the world system.

*In my opinion, fighting for radical changes in the world's economic system demands a certain serious fundamental political and economical theory. You mentioned the necessity of not having a cookbook; does it mean that we'll know where we go by going there?*

Well, I don't think we should look for leadership from economists who are after all the products of the same system of hierarchy and specialization that is responsible for many problems that humanity faces now. I think, what's happened in Brazil with some of the gatherings of people, and in Italy with the social forums, contain much that is of great value to restructuring the world economy. These are concrete examples of how grassroots people can come up with much better solutions than the leaders of the nation-states and corporations. The wisdom of the humanity is so vast today. We just need to create instruments for this collective intelligence to be able to dictate to corporations and governments leaders exactly the steps we should take.

*So are we only waiting for some sudden uprising of people all over the world to change the system? After mass protests in places of IMF and WTO summits, world leaders can easily change the place of their meetings to less attainable places like the northern parts of Canada, and become more autonomous from the society in a way. The protests surely change something, but they only change the schedule of these people. I'm not sure they influence much their decisions.*

You're perfectly right. They have already scheduled a meeting in Canada in a very inaccessible part of Canada and another in Abu Dhabi, where it's also impossible for protesters to arrive. On the other hand the World Bank has promised to reform itself, and to look at some of the problems people are protesting about. They invited some NGOs to go into the World Bank to help with them. The Kwangju uprising and other examples show that people themselves are far wiser than the leaders of the nation-states. Initiative from below, as in Porto Alegre and at social forums, are very important steps. I also think that these protests have had significant consequences. Besides attracting attention on a global level that there are a few people who are making decisions that have tremendous consequences for the entire species, we have also shown that these decisions are not good ones. They wouldn't get these protests if the decisions of these groups were good decisions, if the world system were really eliminating poverty and ending warfare. In fact, just the opposite is happening. The cold war ended, yet the United States is spending more than ever on its military. Why? It's because of the irrational structure of the system. During the Vietnam War the movement called attention to war in Vietnam, during the civil rights movement it called attention to racism, but today the anti-globalization movement is calling attention to the world's structures of economics and politics. Now we have a movement worldwide that is talking about the fundamental issue, and that's a great step forward.

*What is your forecast in the short-run for the world economy and anti-globalization movements? The world is changing so fast, that it's next to impossible to predict the situation for 20-25 years, but what in your opinion will happen in next decade?*

Unfortunately, I don't have a very optimistic view. I think that we'll see crisis tendencies of the system. Japan has been in economic crisis for many years, stagnation, specifically. The German situation appears to be very similar. I expect in the US we will not see new growth that will lead the rest of the world out of this period of economic stagnation. So I see this period of economic stagnation in the countries of industrialized West - Japan, the

US and Germany being the main three. One solution to this problem is war. War in itself requires vast expenditures, which stimulate the economy of the great corporate sector, and it also then requires rebuilding in new conditions when corporate domination is even more obvious, and the power of profit is further increased. So this is a very disturbing trend. At the same time, I think we are in the period when people in the world are not going to simply stand by. Again, South Korea is a great example. Today in South Korea is what the people there are calling the Third Great Uprising. The first being Kwangju, the second - 1987, when they won democracy, and the Third, today, against American bases. Korea, as you know, is not an Islamic country, South Korea is probably, the most anti-Communist country in the world, because of the people's fears, and yet we see a great anti-American uprising in South Korea. The specific catalyze was killing of the two Korean schoolgirls by the army vehicle. But the movement itself is an indication that people in the world understand the great danger, posed by American military action and corporate domination.

All over the world, masses of people demonstrate a great intelligence and capacity for action. In Nigeria, women occupied the Shell Oil complex, winning demands for jobs and day-care. In Peru, insurrections stopped planned take-overs of water resources by international corporations. In Mexico, militant protests halted the government's plan to build a new airport. These are examples of the consciousness-in-action of grassroots people. They portend a great future of struggle.

Questions by Mikhail Kochkin.

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