

**Peter Waterman, The Hague (The Netherlands): From International Communism to the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement. Memoirs of a Long-Distance Internationalist. Autobiographical Project.**

This is a brief account of an ongoing autobiographical project. It is a story of unknown or forgotten times and places in the history of left internationalism. At its core is my coming-of-age experience as one of a group of Communists who worked for the International Union of Students in Prague a half-century or more ago. Because I was so young, and because this was my first such experience, it has actually remained more clearly in my memory than my second experience in Prague, 10 years later. The mid- to late-1950s was the time of the Suez War, the Polish and Hungarian uprisings and the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, all of which impacted on me, if not noticeably on the International Union of Students or the magazine I was working on, *World Student News*. In the later-1960s, I was a labour educator for the already-moribund World Federation of Trade Unions, working, in particular, on Africa. And then – as if still fighting World War Two – the Soviet Union invaded Prague... One year later I left the Communist world. And one year after that I left the world of Communism.

The book begins with my childhood and youth in the Britain of the 1940s-50s. And it continues with my later life, as Communism went through successive crises and splits and then imploded, leaving not only disenchantment but fragmented or repressed memories behind. The major effect on me, perhaps, is that I abandoned politics for academia. The story continues with my transition from the old internationalism to the new. And ends with my engagement (in more senses than one, given that my longtime Peruvian feminist womanfriend is on its International Committee) with my adventures in and around the World Social Forum (2001-?), the 'global justice and solidarity movement' (my name for this many-splendoured thing), and international labour activity in relation to both.

The book is informed by familiarity with internationalist auto/biographical work in several languages and numerous countries. I have been particularly inspired by two of them, both British, neither Communist, and in which the internationalism is implicit more than explicit.<sup>1</sup> It is also inspired by Gramsci's 'scepticism of the intellect, optimism of the will', as well as Isaac Deutscher's sense of the ironies of history – though its ironies may not be his. Numerous quotations, photos and boxes illustrate and lighten the text. So, hopefully, do the Jewish and Anti-Communist jokes (and particularly the Jewish Anti-Communist ones).

Inspired and motivated by the rise of the 'global justice and solidarity movement', the book should be of interest to this growing public. It should also provide a thought-provoking supplementary text for courses on social movements, international relations/ global studies, social history and politics. Given the popularity of the biographical genre, it could also interest the motivated general reader. It will remind readers that 'transnationalism' did not begin in Chiapas 1994, Seattle 1998, or with the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001. There are, amongst these present movements, continuations and reproductions of Communist internationalism (i.e. *internationalism*).

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<sup>1</sup> Rowbotham, Sheila: *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties*. London: Allen Lane, 2000; Christie, Stuart: *Granny Made Me an Anarchist: General Franco, The Angry Brigade and Me*. London: Scribner, 2004.

Written with conscious hindsight, it shows what happened over time to not only the author but a number of his comrades and friends. And it throws a historical light on current events. Although footnoted and referenced, the style is biographical and therefore hopefully accessible to a wider readership.

There are some valuable personal accounts by Communist (or ex-Communist) foreigners who worked for the IUS, or elsewhere in Prague, but these often focus on the period of the trials (early-1950s), or to be solely autobiographical, to be in different languages and/or difficult of access. I know, in fact, of no competitor and – aside from listed memoirs of the IUS – only one possibly comparable work on the 1950s (which relates to Budapest).<sup>2</sup> I can think of no personal account of the World Federation of Trade Unions at all. And only one chapter on the ‘new labour internationalisms’ of the 1970s-80s.<sup>3</sup> There are increasing personal-political accounts of particular moments or parts of the ‘global justice and solidarity movement’. But I am not aware of any title covering the half century or more of this book.

Informed, rather than restricted by, academic methodology (it is extensively footnoted and referenced), the style remains biographical and therefore accessible to a wider readership. It is extensively illustrated, not least with photos taken by myself. The drafts so far amount to perhaps 100,000 words. The total might come to 125-15,000 words. Part of the chapter on Prague 1968 has been published online, <http://www.tni.org/archives/waterman/prague1968.pdf>. Other chapter drafts are also online. I can provide access to these, to a longer outline and other unpublished chapters. If a print publisher responds positively to this information, I could wrap up the work within six months. But I am exploring and experimenting with forms of online publication (e-book and book-on-demand). These require new authorial skills but seem to me quite appropriate to the subject and to our – actually still mostly *their* – globalised and informatised capitalism.

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<sup>2</sup> Podbrey, Pauline: *White Girl in Search of the Party*. Pietermaritzburg: Hadeda Books, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Leather, Alan: ‘Trade union and NGO relations in Development and Social Justice’ in Deborah Eade and Alan Leather (eds). *Development NGOs and Labour Unions: Terms of Engagement*. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2005.