AN EVALUATION OF THE MARXISM OF MESZAROS BY PHIL SHARPE

PART ONE – UNDERSTANDING REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM

In his incredible work ‘Beyond Capital’, Istvan Meszaros intends to outline how the ideology of an end to history is false, and instead the intensification of the contradictions of capitalism are promoting the prospect of change to an alternative socialist society. (1)This book is a welcome defence of the Marxist perspective that the working class can be a revolutionary agency which realises the formation of a communist society. He outlines how both Social Democracy and Stalinism have not been able to overcome the subordination of labour to capital which is still the outstanding task of the present. In contrast, one of the outstanding merits of Marx was to connect the very expansionary logic of capital with the standpoint that it is transitory. Hegel interpreted the dynamic of capital as the reconciliation of the rational with the actual. His approach was not able to grasp that: “True universality in our actually existing world cannot emerge without overcoming the antagonistic contradictions of the capital/labour relationship into which the particular individuals are inserted and by which they are dominated.”(2) However the attempt to resolve this contradiction could not be achieved in terms of Lenin’s imposition of the vanguard consciousness of the party onto the working class. Instead this approach only generated the contradictions of the USSR, and promoted the development of Stalinism. Only the generation of the consciousness of emancipation within the working class could result in the possibility of the overcoming of the domination of labour by capital. This approach has to be developed in the present. The strategic problem with the voluntarist emphasis on the party and politics was that the aim of going beyond the limitations of capital was historically replaced with the importance of the political and the role of the party-state. This standpoint neglected the economic tasks of the creation of the society of the associated producers, and instead the development of Stalinism could not promote communism.

Marx adopted a standpoint which recognised that the character of the relations of production of capital could promote the development of a global economy and international political tasks. This would mean the development of the ability of labour to overcome the alienated domination of capital, and so result in the establishment of a different form of social relations of metabolic control. The dilemma for Marx was that the capitalism system had not reached the level of its expansionary logic and was still capable of economic and historical development. The class struggle was restricted to Europe during his lifetime. An important strategic lesson from this situation was that capitalism could only be superseded on the global level, and the failure to appreciate this situation could result in defeat or the dilution of revolutionary objectives and unprincipled accommodation to the forces of capital. However, the realisation of the global limitations of capitalism have been realised in our times, and this means the perspectives of Marx have only recently fully matured in terms of the intensification of the contradictions of the world economy. The possibility of modification of the system has been undermined by the generation of a structural crisis.

This summary of the standpoint of Meszaros has an emphasis on the importance of the objective character of the contradictions of capitalism, but what is problematic concerns the question of how to develop the consciousness necessary to complement the challenges posed by the objective situation. We know that the role of the Leninist/Lukacsian conception of the role of the party is considered to be inadequate in relation to the possibility to develop genuine mass consciousness of the working class. But we are not told about the alternative? Instead the assumption seems to be that the logic of the role of the productive forces is the basis to resolve these issues. But this standpoint does not elaborate about how the objective aspects interact with the subjective. Is the subjective merely a supplement to the objective, or is it a more dynamic and primary basis of historical change? The assumption seems to be that a one-sided emphasis on consciousness could result in idealist philosophical conceptions and elitism. But the alternative of historical determinism does not seem to be satisfactory. This issue is to be a central question for Meszaros to try to resolve.

An important starting point for Meszaros is the perspective that the contradictions of capitalism can only be resolved in systemic terms: “Today, by contrast, confronting even partial issues with any hope of success implies the necessity of challenging the capital system as such.”(3) This standpoint is based on the view that the crisis of capitalism has matured, and leads to the view that the era of revolutionary politics is the present. But, for many important political and ideological reasons, the approach of reformism has not been discredited. Instead what seems to be antiquated and anachronistic is the Marxist perspective, which seems to have been undermined by the demise of Stalinism and the apparent decline of the collective strength of the working class. Instead of accepting this challenge, Meszaros outlines all issues in terms of the apparent limits of the capitalist system: “For in our own historical epoch, when productive self-expansion is no longer a readily available way out of the accumulating difficulties and contradictions….the global capital system of necessity frustrates all attempts at interfering even to a minimal extent with its structural parameters.”(4) What is not appreciated in relation to this perspective, is that whilst the ideological offensive of the neoliberal order may be an expression of the weakness of capitalism it can also be ideologically interpreted as being the manifestation of the strength of capitalism and its durability when compared to any possible alternatives. This illusory durability of capitalism becomes the popular common sense of mass consciousness, and the result is to undermine any credibility to Marxism. In contrast, Meszaros writing from a definite Marxist perspective, can outline the contradictions of capitalism, but the problem is that very few people are listening and supporting his message. He argues that the new social movements are not an alternative to the emancipatory potential of labour, but whilst this view may be ‘proved’ by reference to Marxist economic analysis the empirical proof of activism seems to express a different conclusion. The very decline of the oppositional role of labour generates the development of the militancy of the new social movements, and so the emancipatory impulses of labour become relegated to theory whilst apparently being discredited at the level of practice. Labour no longer seems to be a material force, and so this militant self-definition is projected onto alternative social forces.

Meszaros outlines how capital is a totalizing force that subordinates society to its control, and he concludes that this situation can only result in resistance. But the point is that labour seems unable to overcome and challenge this situation of domination, and instead the focus of struggle is with the new social movements and activists. The suggestion is that only labour can oppose effectively the articulation and consolidation of capital as a command structure of the activity of human beings. But historical experience has indicated that the possibility of labour to challenge and replace this manifestation of social domination has proved to be very complex. Arguably greater progress has been achieved by the attempt to reform rather than transform this command structure. Hence Meszaros is quite explicit that the revolution in Russia could only result in the consolidation of the post-capital command structure that maintained the alienated and exploited character of labour. The challenge outlined by Meszaros is that the capital system is the most sophisticated system of hierarchy and subordination, and so the problem is how can labour overcome this situation without reproducing domination? Therefore the related question is whether labour has the capacity to transform this situation and generate an emancipatory alternative. Resolving this theoretical task is complicated by the fact that historical experience has not indicated the possibility of a progressive resolution which is able to overcome the role of capital as an agency of social metabolic control. The answer of Meszaros to this empirical dilemma is to suggest that the limits to the role of capital as an expansionary system will create a structural crisis. The implication of this crisis is that the domination of capital will become undermined: “Under the conditions of capital’s structural crisis its destructive constituents come to a fore with a vengeance, activating the sphere of total uncontrollability in a form that foreshadows self-destruction both for this unique social reproductive system itself and for humanity in general.”(5)

What is problematical about this view is that the forces of change become projected onto the objective aspects of the economic and historical situation, and so the role of conscious human agency becomes obscured. The point is that humans can become reconciled to the aspects of uncontrollability of capital because they consider that these destructive aspects are the ‘costs’ of what is accepted as a superior social system. In other words the manifestation of crisis is not the motivating impulse for change as long as the influence of bourgeois ideology remains unchallenged. Meszaros might argue that at some point the crisis will impose itself on our consciousness, but even if we accept this possibility this is still not identical to the development of a revolutionary consciousness that is aspiring for communism. The author would suggest that capital has reached its limits as a global system, but it is still possible to envisage dynamic development within this context without the contradictions of capitalism becoming uncontrollable. This means the refusal of labour to accept the domination of capital is the most destructive and devastating of contradictions, but for various reasons labour is still accommodating itself to the continuation of the capital system. Consequently, as Meszaros outlines, capital continues to be the most successful extractor of surplus labour in history. But he undermines the sensible nature of this view by also suggesting that: "Only when the absolute limits of capital’s innermost structural determinations are brought into play, only then can we speak of a crisis emanating from the faltering efficiency and frightening insufficiency of surplus labour extraction itself, with far-reaching implications for the survival prospects of the capital system as such.”(6) This comment dogmatically glosses over the implications of the efficiency of the process of surplus labour extraction and instead argues that this situation is undermined by the supposed limits of the global system of capital. The possibility that the global system becomes the very context for the effective extraction of surplus labour is dogmatically dismissed by the conception of a crisis situation. What is ignored is that the process of surplus labour extraction continues because labour presently accepts this situation. This very fact enables capital to tackle any contradictory issues raised by the apparently global limits of the system.

Meszaros maintains that the heyday of capitalism in the era of the welfare state is over, and instead capital has no other policy than to undermine the material interests of labour. This view implies that labour will reject this development and instead organise to oppose capital. However, this strategic assumption of revolutionary Marxism ignores the importance of the ideological fact that the influence of bourgeois ideas undermines the generation of the relationship of discontent with the development of mass action. Instead demoralised unrest is prevalent within the working class, and the same point can be made about other subordinated social strata. The standpoint of Meszaros is that the expansionary phase of capital has displaced contradictions for a long period of time, but this situation is coming to an end and is to be replaced by the implications of the uncontrollability of the process of displacement. This view may be accurate but this does not mean the effective end of the subordination of labour to capital. The point is the contradictions of capitalism may be maturing in the manner described by Meszaros, but this does not mean the related decline of the ability of capital to extract a surplus from labour. This is because the most important aspect of the process of surplus extraction is the acceptance of this situation by labour. Only when labour rejects this subordination to capital will its practice correspond to the implications of the contradictions of capitalism. Until this development occurs, the crisis of capitalism can mature and yet the system is not undermined because of the passivity of labour. Meszaros contends that the very structural crisis is expressed by the intensification of exploitation because of subordination to the alienating imperatives of capital, and so the assumption is that labour will ultimately revolt against this situation. This possibility could occur, but objective development of the crisis will not result in this development. What is crucial is the progression of the subjective factor, of a growing consciousness of opposition to the domination of capital. Without this aspect capital could intensify the exploitation of labour and yet revolt will not occur.

Meszaros carried out an invaluable exercise in demystifying the role of the state. He is emphatic that the state is the political command structure of the imperatives of capital: “In truth, however, the modern state belongs to the materiality of the capital system, embodying the necessary cohesive dimension of its expansion-orientated and surplus labour extracting structural imperative.”(7) He makes the point that the close connection between capital and the state means that the role of the state has to be overcome if socialism is to be realised. It was the role of the state in the USSR that promoted the influence of capital within the relations of production. The problem with this view, which is not inaccurate, is that Meszaros ignores the political importance of the state which is to provide authority within society. Thus he denies the possibility that a democratic state can be created which is not subordinated to the influence of capital. Instead because of economic reductionism, which he inherited from the conception of the role of the state under capitalism, the distinctive importance of the state under socialism is denied. Instead Meszaros is committed to the utopian view that the state should wither away. But the very practice of the Bolsheviks proved that this aim was impossible. Hence the actual question was what kind of state should be created. However, he is right to argue that the state under the domination of capital is the personification of the imperatives of capital, and so the personal of the state administration lack genuine controlling autonomy.

Meszaros extends this conclusion to an understanding of the role of labour: “The capital system is based on the alienation of control from the producers. In this process of alienation, capital degrades the real subject of social reproduction, labour, to the condition of a reified objectivity – a mere ‘material factor of production’ – thereby overturning not just in theory but in palpable social practice, the real subject/object relationship. However, the trouble for capital is that the ‘material factor of production’ cannot cease to be the real subject of production. To perform its productive functions, with the consciousness demanded of it by the production process as such – without which capital itself would cease to exist – labour must be made to acknowledge another subject above itself, even if in reality the latter is only a pseudo-subject. To this effect capital needs its personifications in order to mediate (and impose) its objective imperatives as consciously executable commands on the potentially most recalcitrant real subject of the production process.”(8)

Meszaros has elaborated in one paragraph the answer to the debate about which social force is the genuine subject of economic activity. He maintains that as long as capital is able to dominate labour in the process of surplus extraction, labour cannot be the genuine subject and instead the alienating subject is capital because of its ability to subordinate labour to its imperatives. However, the repressed and genuine subject is labour because without its role capital could not exist. Thus the task of Marxism is to facilitate the development of the ability of labour to become an authentic subject by the enhancement of its capacity to overcome the domination of capital. This task does not represent the theoretical preferences, or bias, of Marxism because it is an empirical fact that capital can only persist because of the exploitation of surplus labour. The domination of capital in the relations of production, via the subordination of labour, means that the interests of Marxism as a theory of human liberation and the particular interests of labour coincide. However, it is entirely possible that Marxism will not be able to articulate effectively the interests of labour as the subordinate social force of the relations of production. This situation may mean that labour is not able to overcome the influence of bourgeois ideology. But what Marxism can indicate is that capital can never become the genuine subject of economic activity, and therefore if Marxists do conceive of capital as a subject they are also under the influence of bourgeois ideology. This development would facilitate Marxism becoming unsuitable in relation to the task of providing arguments as to why labour should emancipate itself from the domination of the alienating pseudo-subject of capital. The most principled standpoint of Marxism establishes why compromise between capital and labour can be only temporary, and instead the class struggle is the outcome not of the imagination of Marxism and is instead the expression of the antagonistic character of the relations of production. But what Meszaros does not articulate from his principled approach is greater awareness of the complications concerning labour’s ability to overcome the domination of capital. Instead it seems irrational that labour has not actually acted to emancipate itself from the situation of subordination within the relations of production. Indeed it could be argued that this is the central question that Marxism ignores.

The pessimistic assumption that could be made is that labour will not be able to emancipate itself from the domination of capital and so will not become the subject of history. This possibility seems to be made more likely by the influence of bourgeois ideology and the reactionary role of Social Democracy. Meszaros does not tackle these difficulties and instead is content to suggest that the situation of the suppression of labour as a subject provides the very dynamics and impulses for the possibility that labour will assert itself as a subject and so oppose its subordination by capital. This standpoint may be optimistic for the reasons provided, and yet there seems to be no strategic alternative if labour is to overcome the domination of capital. From this analysis we obtain the understanding that the economic struggle is as important as the political struggle to obtain state power. Indeed it could be argued that the success of the former provides the basis for the development of the latter. The transformation of the relations of production based on the overcoming of the domination of capital provides the pre-conditions for the attempt to overthrow the bourgeois state power. This is the strategy of Marxism that is opposed to the Leninist emphasis on the role of politics. In reality, the development of Soviets did not conform to either of these approaches, and instead the Soviets as organs of popular mass democracy made possible the overthrow of the bourgeois government. However, the neglect of the aim of the transformation of the relations of production was a serious error by the Bolsheviks after the revolution. Labour never became the subject of productive activity, and instead the party-state dictated how the economy developed.

Meszaros attempts to uphold his optimistic position by suggesting that the very development of capital enhances the control of the process of socialisation by labour. This would imply that the very promotion of the system also results in the progress of the ability of labour to establish aspects of control. This view is very optimistic in relation to the present situation of the neoliberal offensive which has been about undermining trade union militancy. The point is that the character of the relations of production cannot be differentiated from the balance of class forces that is defined by economic and political events. In this context the forces of labour have been on the defensive because of the success of the offensive of capital. This situation has been accepted as an accomplished fact that is difficult to oppose because of globalisation and the necessities imposed by recession. The forces of labour lack a strategy and ideology to oppose the aims of capital which are reinforced by the conviction of the arguments of bourgeois ideology. Meszaros suggests that the aims of capital have difficulty in being achieved because of the contradiction between its expansionist logic and the national basis of the state. This may be true, but the problems created by this situation, such as geo-political rivalry, can be at least partially overcome by the success of the class struggle internally and in relation to the ability to partially resolve the tensions between the global and national.

Meszaros outlines how the standpoint of Adam Smith could not establish the capacity of capital to regulate itself in the process of expansion. This task was with socialism and was one indication of its progressive character when compared to capitalism: “To envisage the control of the social metabolism not by the mysterious ‘invisible hand’…..but by a conscious and self-determining human agency - one capable of acting in such a way that its intentions are not a perverse and self-deceiving camouflage for the summarily imposed instrumentality of a fetishistic reproductive order – it is necessary to step outside the structural framework of capital and abandon its material determining ground which is amenable only to the constitution of an uncontrollable mode of control. This is precisely what gives meaning to the socialist project.”(9) This point may have validity, but the point is that capitalism still continues because of the lack of strength and conviction of the oppositional forces. The system may have important economic contradictions that potentially question the ability of the social metabolic system to function, but in an inadequate manner the system will continue because of the very problem of promoting a mass movement of opposition to the aims and interests of capitalism. Meszaros outlines how various bourgeois political economy theorists have been unable to elaborate convincing approaches for providing an alternative to the instability and uncontrollability of the present economic system. This may be true but it is also difficult to elaborate a conception that would go beyond the very limitations of capital as a social metabolic order because of the difficulties involved in promoting an effective agency of change. Instead an emphasis on the role of the entrepreneur, or the corporation, seems as valid as trying to outline the emancipatory possibilities of labour. Meszaros implies that Galbraith’s emphasis on the role of planning and corporations within capitalism is illusory, but the point is that this illusion seems to be well-grounded in a period of 1950’s boom and the apparently increasing unwillingness of labour to contest the validity of capitalism.

Meszaros outlines how capital has second order mediations that uphold the system. They include the nuclear family, conformity to the alienation of capital, money, subordinating of the objectives of the economy to capital accumulation, labour unable to exercise control in capitalist and post-capitalist societies, the role of the state and the uncontrollable world market. These aspects constitute the social metabolic order and ensure that partial attempts to change society are not successful: “This is why the real target of radical socialist transformation must be the capital system as such, with all its second order mediations, and not simply the act of legal expropriation of the private capitalist personifications of capital.”(10) It was possible to privatise the nationalised economy of the USSR because the system was not based on the demise of the second order mediations of capital, and this situation means only the total transformation of the role of capital is principled and effective. This point seems to be valid because the history of nationalisation is based on the reconciliation of this action with the aims of capital. Only the promotion of the domination of labour within the relations of production can end the ability of capital to influence the process of economic activity. However, what does seem to be ambitious is the aim to end the role of money and to abolish the state. It is arguably possible to retain the role of money as a medium of exchange without also justifying and exercising the continued domination of capital within the economy. Thus money could be the basis for remuneration that people would recognise and support, in contrast to the effective return to a barter economy if money was abolished. The role of money would be compatible with an economy based on the circulation of a high level of commodities. Furthermore, the state would be needed in order to create laws and represent authority within society. It is possible to envisage a different role to the state that was not subordinated to the requirements of capital. But a society based on the reconciliation of capital and labour would be utopian, and in actuality would uphold the continued influence of the domination of the former.

Meszaros makes the valid point that the ability to generate control of capital means understanding its character: “For, obviously, it is quite impossible to gain control over the alienating, dehumanizing and destructive determinations of capital, which proved to be uncontrollable throughout history, without understanding its nature.”(11) However, this point should not be applied merely to theorists of political economy but instead is primarily important in relation to the forces of labour. For whatever reason, it has been labour that has been unable to understand the activity of capital in a revolutionary manner that would have facilitated the development of the process of realising emancipation. Trade union struggle has not been sufficient to bring about the demise of the domination of capital, and political parties that have had socialist aims have generally reconciled themselves with the capitalist system. These developments have been reinforced by theorists who have mystified the historical importance of capital and suggested it is the eternal system. The result is that workers engage in class struggle but with a prejudice against the aim of socialism. Meszaros explains the durability of capital in terms of its ability to continue to reproduce its second hand order mediations. This standpoint may have merit but in a sense the ability of capital to survive because of its own internal aspects is of lesser importance to the Marxist than the concern about the apparent inability of labour to act to realise the demise of the domination of capital. Are we wrong to consider that labour has an historical mission? Indeed, even if we reject this status of historical mission can we still sustain the view that labour can act to overcome the historical durability of capital? Meszaros partially answers this question by outlining how capital can adapt to the role of technology in order to realise the most repressive forms of political control over society. But the problem with this answer is that it only addresses the most exceptional periods in the history of capital, such as the period of world wars and imperialist adventures. We also need to address the issue of the acquiescence of labour to capital in typical periods of uncontested domination, or when the influence of bourgeois ideology is not challenged. For example, Meszaros dismisses the importance of social mobility as an example of bourgeois ideology, but this development is actually a good reason for undermining collective class struggle. But he does mention the difficulties involved in generating international consciousness of labour, which does seriously undermine the development of a strategy of human emancipation.

But despite the limitations in his explanation of the reasons why labour continues to be subservient to capital, he still outlines the major reason for this situation: “And worst of all, because of the perverse mediations of the essential socioeconomic reproductive functions through the alienated objectification of living labour as capital – superimposed on labour in a reified form, confounding the category of always necessary means and material of production with capital as such, in its independence from and indeed hostile opposition to labour, - the historically generated and likewise historically changeable human power relations appear as purely material entities, unalterable in their essential constitution.”(12) Thus in a voluntary sense there is acceptance of the structural constraints imposed by capital. In ideological terms we can elaborate this standpoint and suggest that the standpoint of class compromise and reconciliation between employer and workers becomes more prevalent than the approach of class struggle. This understanding is not undermined by strikes because the role of the employer is still considered to be indispensable and the objective basis for the possibility of labour. The ideological inversion of the role of labour and capital means that capital is considered to be the essential aspect of the relations of production and its exploitative character is obscured. The militant activity of the working class does not eradicate these ideological illusions. Instead labour has to undergo a conscious process of evaluating the role of capital, and this may have many complications because of the very mystifying character of the relations of capital and labour and the importance of bourgeois ideology. Meszaros, as a principled Marxist, has repudiated this process of mystification, but this does not in and in itself tackle the alienated consciousness of labour. Instead Marxism has to become effective as a political project if this task of indicating the exploitative role of capital is to be indicated.

The difficulties of this project of the transformation of the standpoint of labour does not mean that Meszaros’s aim of the total structural transformation of the social metabolic order of capital is unrealistic. Historical experience has indicated that this is the only principled and effective strategy for the overcoming of the domination of capital. This perspective vindicates revolutionary Marxism against all of the partial solutions and reformism of Social Democracy. However, the problem is that reformism has been historically more influential than this strategic alternative of Marxism. This is partially because Leninism was not based on the perspective of the transformation of all the various aspects of the domination of capital. Indeed it could be argued that the genuine perspective of Marxism has been marginalised by the role of Social Democracy, and the evolution of the Russian revolution. The merit of Meszaros is to re-discover this principled strategy and provide it with theoretical justification. The history of German Social Democracy led to the view that socialism was to be achieved by the political changes brought about by a Parliamentary majority, and Bolshevism was based on an emphasis of a revolutionary rupture at the level of state power. The emphasis on economics became criticised as a syndicalist deviation, Meszaros had restored the conception of structural economic transformation within the standpoint of Marxist orthodoxy.

Meszaros challenges his own optimism about the prospects of change when he comments: “For a century and a half after Marx’s reflections on the subject, the capital system continues to assert its power – and by no means only in the theories of its apologists, but ubiquitously in the everyday lives of the individuals – as an apparently unchallengeable permanence. It prevails by controlling all aspects of social metabolic reproduction and distribution in a way to which, despite the system’s contradictions and destructiveness, there seems to be no practically viable alternative.”(13) This must mean that there is something within the relations of production of the capital system that can express the possibility and actuality of effective functioning and expansion. The result of this situation is that labour accepts its subordinated position and considers capital to be ‘eternal’ and ‘natural’. In a sense this situation has never been challenged because the period of the most militant opposition to capitalism was inspired by the example of the October revolution rather than the perspective that capital was limited and flawed. Furthermore, the argument that capitalism was inferior was inspired by boasting about the achievements of the USSR rather than extensive analysis of the contradictions of the relations of production of capital. The result of this theoretical omission was that the superiority of capital was not contrasted to the alternative posed by the role of labour. Meszaros proposes to rectify this limitation by contending: “What requires proof in this respect – concerning a qualitatively different future – is that the historically constituted and still unfolding ontology of labour, in its fundamental meaning of both agency and activity of social metabolic reproduction, can sustain itself with a higher degree of productivity when freed from the straitjacket of the established mode of expanded surplus extraction than when its movement is constrained by the latter’s perverse imperative of capital accumulation……….But the crucial part of the proof in question must be the actual reconstitution of labour itself not simply as the antagonist of capital but as the sovereign creative agent of the labour process. An agency capable of securing…….conditions of expanded reproduction without the crutches of capital.”(14)

In other words it had been the very character of the October revolution which unfortunately undermined the progress of the class struggle because it obscured one of its most vital questions, which was concerned with the capacity of labour to replace the role of capital within the relations of production. The October revolution generated political questions about the merits, or otherwise, of the political regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and so the vital question about the feasibility of labour to overcome the role of capital and transform the relations of production was neglected. This omission implied that the future of socialism was with the importance of the vanguard party, and that labour had to play a supporting role in the revolutionary process. But Meszaros outlines how to Marx a moral and political critique of capitalism had to be subsumed by the perspective of labour overcoming the imperatives of capital accumulation. The reduction of labour to the imperatives of capital could be overcome and this was one of the primary reasons that would make socialism realistic. In contrast, the emphasis of the October revolution was on the political superiority of the workers state, and therefore the role of labour within the relations of production was ignored apart from Bukharin’s justification of the centralisation of production by the state. The emphasis on the importance of soviet democracy and the creation of the commune state meant the ignoring of the possibility of labour overcoming the role of capital within the relations of production.

In contrast the very argument of Marx for socialism suggested that the structural antagonism between capital and labour would undermine capitalism as a viable system of social metabolic reproduction. The outcome of this situation would be the demise of capital and the development of social relations based on the importance of labour. However, this possibility is based on the pre-condition of practice: “For the present embodiment of the capital relation in an economically advanced material basis is no more than a mere potentiality for the creation of the projected new, radically different, mode of control of social metabolic reproduction. As such, the new mode of reproductive interchange appears only on the positive outer horizon of a comprehensive social transformatory practice.”(15) But for a variety of reasons, which are connected to the form in which the class struggle developed, historical events did not occur in the manner envisaged by Marx. The prospect of social transformation was never posed in terms of the possibility of labour ending the role of capital within the relations of production. Instead the class struggle took the mediated political form of conflict between parties, and defensive struggles against the threat of counterrevolution. Industrial struggles were only occasionally interpreted in terms of the necessity to realise the transformation of society by labour, and often they were conceived as being merely secondary to the ultimate political struggle for state power. Thus the tasks of labour were never cogently and systematically conceived in terms of the reconstruction of the capital system, and instead this issue was effectively ignored until the rediscovery of this task by Meszaros.

He makes the point that the primarily political interpretation of revolutionary aims is not sufficient because what becomes ignored is transformation of the existing relations of production, or the qualitative change that is needed in order to make socialism successful. The historical result of neglect of this task is the failure of the October revolution to emancipate labour, and instead this event promoted the continued subordination of labour within the post-capital system: “For society is administered by the new type of ‘personification of capital’, the party bureaucrats of the post-capitalist capital system, whose primary function is to impose on the new type of ‘personification of labour’…..the imperatives of a reified and fatefully alienating system of social metabolic reproduction.”(16) Thus the outcome of the neglect of the primary aim of Marx’s understanding of capitalism, which is the emancipation of labour from the domination of capital, meant that the October revolution is carried out with serious theoretical limitations. These flaws become practically expressed in the neglect of the task of trying to bring about the emancipation of labour from the imperatives of capital, which become personified in the party state. The fact that the first proletarian revolution has these serious problems means that international class struggle does not develop in terms of the primary task of the emancipation of labour. Consequently, the role of economic objectives is ignored and instead the aims of revolution become primarily political. This situation implies that the working class is influenced by a form of radical false consciousness, and therefore justifies the neglect of primary tasks including the issue of the emancipation of labour. The role of the revolutionary party reinforces this problem because it conceives of the class struggle in terms that exclude the task of the emancipation of labour from the domination of capital. Marxist politics ignore the lessons of Marx’s ‘Capital’, and instead the emphasis is on his views about state power.

This situation does not mean that labour would have advanced more effectively without the role of parties, because spontaneous autonomy also has its own problems. But certainly, the role of the German SPD, and the Bolsheviks, meant Marxism became one-sided in a manner that Marx did not intend. Thus Meszaros is trying to re-discover Marxism without the emphasis of Social Democracy or Bolshevism. In general he has been successful in this task and has been able to elaborate the revolutionary heritage of Marxism. The aim is not to repudiate Lenin, but instead to suggest why Leninism could not succeed because of the neglect of the overall analysis of Marx. It could be argued that the central problem for Lenin was the low development of the productive forces and the isolation of the revolution. These aspects are not denied by Meszaros. But what is also undeniable is the one-sidedness of Leninism because of the neglect of the strategic importance of labour. Hence, nationalisation without workers control could not result in human emancipation. Instead the role of these theoretical limitations was adverse in that the transformation of the relations of production could not be advanced and instead the party state was promoted.

This situation could only be changed by an economic transformation that would bring about a situation in which the reproduction of the social metabolic order was achieved by the creativity of the labour of individuals. This means that the alienating character of the second order mediations would be replaced by the ability of labour to regulate the conditions and character of the relations of production. In order to realise this situation the effective domination over the social metabolic order by the party state would have to be ended, and instead the role of labour would have to become ascendant. How this could have occurred is not explained by Meszaros. The ideology of the party state would have to be opposed in a manner that did not discredit the conception of socialism. This is not what happened because the very party state became the promoter of the restoration of capitalism, as Meszaros is aware. In the so called socialist societies the importance of labour for the transformation of the relations of production was not elaborated, and instead the view that the party state could only be replaced by capitalism became hegemonic.

Meszaros has his own view about the historical failure of the attempts to realise socialism in the initial years of striving. He contends: “The Marxian theory was striving as it could at the time of its conception towards its realization, but reality itself refused to strive towards it in a way hoped for and stipulated by its originator.”(17) This situation was because capitalism was still capable of expansion and so attempts to overthrow it were premature. Such a view is very determinist and seems to ignore the significance of the serious crisis of the capitalist system such as World War One and Two. Furthermore, the inspiration of the October revolution did result in international struggle to overthrow capitalism, and the economic crisis of the 1930’s was responsible for generating class struggle in France, Germany and Spain. It was the limitations of Social Democracy and Stalinism rather than the supposed dynamism of capitalism that was mainly responsible for the inability to overthrow capitalism in Europe. Only after 1945 did the capitalism system effectively expand and manifest its durability. Meszaros utilises the period of the dynamic development of capital to deny the possibility of revolutionary change because he assumes that politics can only conform to economics. This reductive view denies the actual tensions of class struggle that did raise the possibility of world revolution before 1945. The system only stabilised in the period of cold war. But Meszaros seems to deny the instability of the previous period of recent history and instead is concerned to make an argument that the intensification of the contradictions of capitalism has only recently fully matured, which means the capital system has reached absolute limits.

The first limit is the contradiction between the global character of capital and the system of nation states. It is dogmatically assumed that that this relationship could achieve stability in the past because of the expansionary logic of capital, but this situation is undermined by the uncertain connection of economic and political power, as expressed by the revolt of oppressed peoples and the periodic wars of the imperialist powers: “Monopolies in the past could be established with arguable rationality inside the borders of effectively controlling national territories, as well as in the colonies once upon a time firmly held under their rule by a handful of imperial powers. Today, by contrast, the idea of universally prevailing monopolies which could assert their interests within the framework of a fully integrated global economy, lacks all rationality.”(18) This view underestimates the importance of the previous periods of the maturing of the contradictions of imperialism that led to world wars and their connected impulse for world revolution. Instead he overestimates the present unrest with the domination of imperialism and contends that: “Thus under the unfolding conditions the earlier successfully working practice of displacing the capital’s system’s contradictions through global expansionary development becomes extremely problematical.”(19) In contrast to this view it could be argued that most countries presently accept the ideology and practice of globalisation, and so unrest takes the form of religious discontent. The working class has been put on the defensive by the competitive imperatives of global production. But, in the past, the contradictions of imperialism led to world war and the intensification of the international class struggle. However, Meszaros predicts that the only outcome of the intensification of the centralisation and concentration of capital can be increased unemployment and social unrest. Consequently he comments: “However, the absolute limits of the capital system are activated when the sharpening antagonisms of the global material and political interchanges would call for genuine positive solutions, but capital’s deeply entrenched mode of social metabolic control is structurally incapable of providing them. For it must drive….forward, on its own ‘line of least resistance’ – under the law of ever increasing concentration and centralization – towards the domination of a handful of ‘global players’ both internally and internationally, brushing aside all concern with the explosive dangers of such developments.”(20)

The problem with this view is that whilst it might objectively express a certain tendency within the capital system nevertheless the role of the political and ideological might express opposing developments. It is entirely possible for diplomacy and international meetings to resolve some of the tensions caused by the intensification of the contradictions of capitalism. Furthermore, the various leaders of the world powers may recognise that they have common problems that transcend the national differences and tendencies caused by the competition of states and monopolies. For example, the most important governments have finally recognised the necessity to tackle the ecological situation and there is some form of unity about tackling terrorism. It is also understood that it is vital that economic differences do not result in political conflict, and so there are regular meetings of the G8 and G20. But most important of all, the struggle for national self-determination has been replaced by the motivation of the oppressed nations to become a successful part of the process of globalisation. This situation indicates that the dynamic of globalisation is extending the expansionary potential of the world economy. In other words, the various countries of the world recognise that it is necessary to unite in favour of economic progress, and therefore not let national differences undermine this aim. Hence it is dogmatic to deny the possibility that some form of reconciliation between states can be realised, at least in temporary terms. In the long-term, the trend may be that contradictions become irreconcilable, but for the present the role of politics is able to alleviate them, even if the utopia of world government will never be realised. The structural context of this situation does consist of the contradictory relations between the various nation states and their monopolies, but this prospect of disunity is at least temporarily overcome by the concern of international politicians to resolve economic and diplomatic issues.

However, Meszaros is right to suggest that the alternative is not represented by the defensiveness of the working class movement. Instead there is an urgent need to articulate a strategy for the development of an alternative type of social metabolic order. This standpoint is located within the controversial view that capital has reached its structural limits: “For it was only a matter of time before capital – in its irrepressible drive to go beyond the encountered limits – had to overreach itself by contradicting its inner logic, thereby colliding with the insurmountable structural limits of its own mode of social metabolic control.”(21) This can take the form of ecological problems, famine, and massive expenditure on arms. But primarily the expansionary logic of capital means that there is a constant impulse for mass production and the denial of the necessary rational control of resources. The very character of capital means that sustainable production cannot be realised: “As a result, the ultimately unavoidable necessity of securing the sustainable management of the conditions of production and social metabolic reproduction in their proper global context reveals itself as being irremediably beyond capital’s reach, no matter how far and how perilously the system overreaches itself.”(22) This situation is connected to incessant consumption, and the creation of artificial and luxury needs, such as the constant need to increase the number of cars per family unit. In other words the imperatives of capital generate the massive waste of resources, and the misuse of science and technology, because of their subordination to the requirements of the economic system. The actual result of this waste is the generation of scarcity and low rate of utilisation of goods. Meszaros concludes that: “It is not too difficult to see – even if the personifications of capital finds it impossible to admit – that no system of social metabolic reproduction can indefinitely survive on that basis.”(23)

The implication is that at some point a limit will be reached that will generate the required consciousness to bring about change. This is a controversial perspective because people are accustomed to living in a society that is already beyond its limits. We accept that supermarkets will be full of goods that we cannot afford to buy, and also have become accustomed to the fact of waste and luxury production and the reckless use of resources which is manifested in scarcity and famine. Thus because of the ideology that the market is the most efficient basis to allocate resources and goods we do not question this situation. Support for a socialist alternative is very low and instead the influence of bourgeois ideology means that we accept the irrational waste of resources as an expression of economic efficiency and dynamism. The point is that only the development of popular support for an alternative type of economy would indicate at the level of consciousness why these destructive features of the capitalist economy can be overcome by the realisation of an alternative form of social metabolic order. But until that time the system of capitalism will be accepted and tolerated despite the fact that it has effectively passed the point of its structural limits.

Meszaros actually explains why the capitalist system has not been opposed despite essentially reaching its structural limits. This is because the working class has tended to accommodate to particular and reformist objectives which have meant rejecting universal goals of human emancipation. This situation was originally connected to the economic dynamism of the capitalist system: “For as long as the historical ascendency of capital could continue undisturbed on the global terrain, there had to be room in effective material terms also for the pursuit of particularistic interests in the labour movements of the relatively privileged countries.”(24)This period is over, but the consciousness of the past continues to undermine the possibility of the creation of socialist views in the present. The point is that the view that capitalism has reached its structural limits is not shared by many people, and instead the present system is still considered to be the most effective and able to meet aspirations.

Meszaros seems to outline the potential for the development of socialist consciousness on the basis of the view that the era of reforms is over: “The organizational forms and corresponding strategies for obtaining defensive gains for labour proved to be strictly temporary and in the longer run totally unviable. There was never any chance of instituting socialism by gradual reforms within the framework of the established mode of social metabolic reproduction. What created the illusion of moving in that direction was precisely the feasibility – and for a few decades also the practicality – of defensive gains, made possible by the relatively untroubled global expansionary phase of capital. Under the circumstances of the system’s structural crisis, however, even the once partially favourable elements in the historical equation between capital and labour must be overturned in favour of capital.”(25) The problem with this standpoint is that consciousness is not automatically transformed by changing economic circumstances. People still retain views formed in the past such as support for reforms, and this is why the National Health Service is the most popular institution in the UK. Furthermore, people have not interpreted the increased inability to obtain reforms as a reason to become revolutionary socialists; instead they have often accepted the arguments of bourgeois ideology such as the necessity to make sacrifices in order to make the economy more stable and competitive. This situation has been reinforced by the neoliberal offensive of the 1980’s and 1990’s which made people accustomed to cuts in the quality of social services, lower public expenditure and mass unemployment.

In contrast, despite the change in the balance of the class forces in favour of the ruling class in this period of the neoliberal offensive, Meszaros contends that the mass unemployment and increasing equalisation of the rate of exploitation of the international working class: ‘can in the end only intensify the internal disruptive tensions of the prevailing mode of socially metabolic reproduction on all planes and in all countries.’(26) He argues that increasing mass unemployment and the lowering of the standard of living, and the authoritarian repression of strikes, is creating discontent that will increasingly be aimed at the overthrow of the capital system: “Thus, even if such a solution could be economically feasible at all within the framework of the profit-maximizing accumulation orientated system – which, of course, it is not, as the consistent rejection of even very modest trade union demands for the reduction of the required weekly hours of work shows – the pursuit of that course of action would still produce social dynamite in the given, utterly aimless, social order.”(27) What is glossed over are the ideological effects of a period of defeats in the class struggle which have had a profound effect on the consciousness of the working class, and also objectively transformed the balance of class forces in favour of the policies which uphold the interests of capital. This means that the influence of bourgeois ideology becomes more prevalent and the view that the working class is able to influence events is undermined. Consequently, the situation may objectively represent the realisation of the structural limits of the capital system, and the end to the ability to displace the contradictions of the system, but the ruling class does not recognise this situation and instead is determined to impose the effects of these contradictions onto the working class. The result of this situation is the demoralisation of labour and the undermining of the consciousness required for the transition to socialism. Hence the crucial problem with Meszaros’s standpoint is that he does not seem able to relate the events of the class struggle to his analysis, and instead he dogmatically insists on its validity.

Consequently, Meszaros insists on the correctness of his strategy without any qualification, and despite the serious setbacks in the class struggle: “Thus the need for a transition to a social order, controllable and consciously controlled by the individuals, as advocated by the socialist project, remains on the historical agenda despite all failures and disappointments. Naturally, this transition requires an epochal shift – a sustained effort to go beyond all forms of structurally entrenched domination – which cannot be envisaged without a radical restructuring of the existing forms and instruments of social metabolic reproduction, in contrast to accommodating the original socialist aims to the paralyzing material constraints of the inherited conditions, as it happened in the past.”(28) What is being advocated is the perspective that victory can be inevitable because of the importance of the contradictions of the structural limits which can only worsen the social conditions of capitalism. This standpoint underestimates the problem of the adverse balance of class forces, and the lowering of the class consciousness of labour because of defeats in the class struggle. Instead the deteriorating objective situation is considered to establish the favourable prospects for transition to socialism. He does not recognise that the relationship of the objective and the subjective can itself be contradictory because of the complex role of consciousness. Hence ideology can act to prolong the illusion that capitalism is the superior economic system even though its actual contradictions are intensifying and are irresolvable under the present conditions. Furthermore, the ruling class is determined to uphold the system despite the growing problems caused by the process of capital accumulation. They always consider that the crisis can be resolved at the expense of the working class. The application of this strategy can undermine the very ability of the working class to struggle to defend its gains, and in this defensive situation the level of consciousness is lowered and expectations about the future are undermined. Meszaros seems to lack an approach that would tackle these issues and instead his optimism seems illusory and unable to tackle the whole gamut of political problems raised by a declining capitalism. This one-sidedness could be resolved by an analysis of class consciousness. However, the emphasis on the importance of objectivism presently denies the necessity of this task. The aspect of reductionism has to be rejected if a more balanced analysis is to be adopted.

PART TWO – LUKACS

The importance of the study by Meszaros of the work of Lukacs is his continuation of the elaboration of his understanding of Marxism. His starting point is that the tragic aspect of Lukacs’s encounter with Marxism is that it is mediated by the understanding that it has to be reconciled with the role of the vanguard party. This standpoint led to activism which resulted in an idealist type of denial of the durability of capitalism in order to maintain itself against the aspirations of the working class to bring about its overthrow: “The still far from exhausted ascendency of capital on the global terrain had to be not only minimized but altogether ignored in his discourse, centred on the proletariat’s ‘ideological crisis’ and on the role of the politically committed and morally responsible intellectuals in helping to resolve that crisis.”(29) The political conclusion of this perspective was to argue that revolution was imminent, and so the Russian revolution was interpreted as the irreversible beginning of the realisation of world socialism. It is interesting that Meszaros’s emphasis on the stabilisation of capitalism, despite the recent Russian revolution, results in his effective criticism of Lukacs for misplaced optimism about the prospect of the world revolution. In contrast, to Lukacs, it is Meszaros who has the most systematic conception of the success of the class struggle because of objective material impulses. Lukacs’s optimism is tempered by a realisation that success is influenced by the quality of the vanguard party and the ability of the working class to overcome alienated consciousness. Unfortunately his standpoint was fundamentally compromised by the advent of Stalinism which meant the party no longer had its Leninist virtues. This compromise with empirical reality meant the effective rejection of the revolutionary optimism associated with the emphasis on the role of the Leninist party.

The point is that whilst Lukacs effectively considered the party as the essential mediation of the role of the working class as the revolutionary subject, Meszaros is ambiguous about the necessity of this mediation. To Meszaros what is vital is that the working class rediscovers its sense of a historical mission to transform and overcome the domination of capital. Lukacs would argue that this standpoint can only become meaningful in relation to the importance of the vanguard party. Hence Lukacs cannot interpret Marxism without the mediation of Leninism. Meszaros would dispute this standpoint and instead whilst praising Lenin as a great revolutionary leader he would reject the Lukacian understanding of the relationship of Lenin to Marx. Instead he would effectively support the view that Marxism has to break with the Leninist legacy if the working class is to re-discover an understanding of revolutionary tasks. This means the philosophical idealist interpretation of Leninism, as classically provided by Lukacs, has to be replaced with the objective and materialist understanding of Marxism. This also means that economics has to displace the centrality of politics within strategy. In other words, the Leninist party is not the instrument of human emancipation and instead has led to the formation of the exploitative party state. Repeat of this development can only be avoided by a return to Marx, which is being pioneered by Meszaros. Thus we have to be aware that the critique of Lukacs is a critique of Lenin. Despite the idealism and ethical emphasis of Lukacs, he has outlined the character of Leninism as the substitution of the role of the party for that of the proletariat. Meszaros can only suggest this critique in the most subtle manner because he has great respect for Lenin as the leader of a revolution. Hence he does differentiate between Lenin and Stalin. But the tasks of the present do not require the re-emergence of the Leninist party. Only the working class can carry out the tasks of human emancipation. Consequently, a Marxist party would assist rather than dominate this process of struggle. The intellectual role of Meszaros – whilst not outlined on the surface of this critique – is to debunk the elitist attractions of the Leninist party via the criticism of Lukacs. Meszaros would differentiate between Lenin the realist from Lukacs the optimist, but he united them as being defenders of the historical role of the vanguard party. Meszaros is in favour of a different type of party, which is the genuine party of Marx. He sets himself the task of writing its analysis of capitalism, strategy and conception of historical materialism.

Meszaros outlines how Lukacs is able to articulate a conception of the collective subject in comparison to the failure of some previous thinkers like Hegel, but he also has to tackle the dilemma of the increasing bureaucratisation of the Communist International which undermines the validity of his romantic view of the revolutionary party. The objectivism of Meszaros is critical of the Lukacsian emphasis on the importance of class consciousness of the proletariat as the most important aspect of historical progress. This issue of consciousness is made precise in terms of the role of the party. Hence the difficulties of developing a revolutionary situation are not related to the unfavourable objective situation and instead this issue is connected to the limitations of consciousness. Consequently the emphasis on ideological factors would be undermined if it was accepted that the primary problem for realising revolutionary advance was the significance of objective factors. This means the result of reducing the objective aspect to one of consciousness is to deny the importance of the former aspect and instead what is justified is voluntarism: “In Lukacs’s voluntaristic subordination of some of the most powerful objective forces – characteristically described as ‘mere economic expedients’ – to the ‘reality of class struggle’ we find precisely this tendency to inverted reductionism………The unrealistic emphasis placed on political and ideological factors goes hand in hand with fatefully underestimating capital’s power of recovery and continuing rule.”(30)

The problem with this critique is that it fails to locate the importance of class consciousness within the class struggle. Historical experience has indicated that the objective situation is of less importance than the issue of how the working class interprets and understands economic and political developments, and whether they are willing to engage in collective action. A low level of consciousness means that the prospects for militant mass activity are low, but higher forms of understanding of the situation result in the possibility of the development of popular opposition to capitalism. The point is that Lukacs’s Hegelian inspired approach to class consciousness may have its limitations, but his recognition of its importance is not misplaced. It is also necessary to recognise that Meszaros’s criticism is rigid and dogmatic because he has a standpoint that can only envisage the favourable opportunities for class struggle in a situation that is different from that which existed at the time of the Russian revolution. Therefore he suggests that: “Socialist radicalism was then (and remains even more today) feasible only on condition that the antagonist of capital strategically assessed the potentialities as well as the inescapable structural limitations of its adversary from a global perspective.”(31) The assumption being made is that the success of the Russian revolution is a false basis to expect new victories in the class struggle because world capitalism is too strong and durable. Only the development of global contradictions can bring about the ultimate possibility to realise world socialism. What this reductionist view ignores is that it is the Russian revolution which has motivated international class struggle against capitalism. Lukacs may be over-optimistic and idealist in his methodology but he has grasped that the political and ideological situation has become more favourable to class struggle. In contrast, Meszaros is trying to deny this development because of his objectivist standpoint which can only equate global crisis with the promotion of class struggle. What he seems to ignore is that World War One was this global crisis and resulted in the Russian revolution and the impulses that have led to international class struggle. Lukacs is trying to respond to these developments.

But Meszaros was right to suggest that Lukacs underestimated the influence of reformism, and that he failed to recognise the limitations of the Leninist party. The political and organisational basis of working class solidarity had been undermined by the events of world war one, and the objective situation was characterised by the global ascendency of capital which undermined the prospects of the victory of the class struggle in Europe. Instead of recognition of these important reactionary factors Lukacs projected onto the party the ability to resolve the problem of class consciousness and advance the prospect of revolution: “The importance of the objective factors was constantly minimised by Lukacs in order to enhance the plausibility of his direct ideological appeal to an idealized proletarian class consciousness and to its ‘active, visible and organized incarnation’, the equally idealized party. The crisis of the capitalist system was exaggerated out of all proportions so as to suggest that, had it not been for the ‘minds of the workers’, the established order could not sustain itself any longer. In this way the neglect of the material factors gave the illusion to Lukacs that the economic and social preconditions of revolutionary transformation were ‘often fulfilled’ and only the ‘minds of the workers’ had to be modified by the ‘active and visible incarnation of their class consciousness’ in order to gain victory over the ‘objectively extremely precarious condition of bourgeois society’.(32) Meszaros is suggesting that there is a rational aspect in the workers general reluctance to engage in attempts to overthrow capitalism in Europe which is the durability and enduring strength of the system. Such a crucial aspect is not recognised by Lukacs because of his subjectivism and idealism. He denied the post-war recovery of capitalism and instead his approach becomes dogmatic because of this rejection of the importance of objective factors concerning the stability of the system. This results in philosophical reasoning as the explanation of the stability of the system.

In other words the various theoretical limitations of the standpoint of Lukacs can only result in the glorification of the role of the Leninist party as the basis to resolve the outstanding issues of his standpoint. However, the alternative of Meszaros does not provide a contrasting theoretical rationalisation for the role of the party because of the determining influence of objective factors. The importance of the party is undermined by the apparent strength of capitalism, and so the only justification of its significance is defined as an expression of apologetics. This means we have an uneasy conception of the revolutionary role of the proletariat, but one that cannot be exercised because of the importance of adverse objective factors. This understanding seems to dismiss all activism as voluntarist. In contrast, at least Lukacs justifies activism even if this is outlined in subjective terms. Hence the tension in the approach of Meszaros is that theory only occasionally seems to be a guide for practice. In contrast, to Lukacs theory is always a guide to practice, via the role of the Leninist party. Lukacs can establish reasons for passivity in the class struggle such as the role of ideology and the exercise of the free will of the proletariat. In contrast, Meszaros can justify the apparent omnipotence of the objective factor for undermining the development of class struggle. Hence we have the opposition of objectivism and subjectivism and we are likely to choose the latter because it at least justifies the view that the class struggle can succeed despite the durability of capitalism. But Meszaros would argue that this is an unrealistic attitude that denies the actual relationship of the objective to subjective.

However, Meszaros is on firmer ground when he outlines that the conception of the subject-object identity standpoint represents idealism because under all forms of class society there must be a situation of separation instead of unity. This is because the subject generates the objective conditions of exploitation and the domination of the forces of these forces: “Thus the real issue of the subject-object relationship is how to reconstitute, at a level fully consonant with the historically achieved productive development of society, the necessary unity of the working subjects with the attainable objective conditions of their meaningful life activity. The identity of the subject and object never existed, and nor could it ever exist….Nonetheless, the qualitatively different reconstitution of the unity between living labour as the active subject, and the objective conditions required for the exercise of creative human energies, in accordance with the historically achieved level of productive advancement, is both feasible and necessary.”(33) Consequently within class society the material conditions of class society do not enable the subject to control the object. Instead the objective is an alienated force that undermines the aspirations of the subject. Thus unity of the subject and object can only be achieved in philosophical terms. In relation to the role of the social and the economic, the actual objective as capital becomes inverted as the pseudo subject and the genuine subject of labour becomes reduced to the passivity or an appendage of capital. This means the theoretical logic of the subject-object identity is a justification for capitalism and does not represent an argument for socialism.

In contrast, Lukacs projects the importance of subject-object identity onto the role of philosophical praxis and ethics in order to establish this unity, or the expression of collective historical agency, which could take the mediating form of the role of the party. However, the idealist justification of this identity reasoning means that this unity is established in theory and the role of practice is subsumed into this process. Therefore the real subject of the proletariat, which is subordinated to the domination of capital and the importance of alienation and exploitation, is dissolved into the philosophical process of the connection of the subject and object. This means: “All that is needed to turn the ‘unconscious’ proletariat – at present captive of its ‘psychological consciousness ‘ – into a proletariat fully conscious of its subject status; a task to be achieved by means of ideological clarification and theoretical illumination.”(34) Thus the role of material mediations for the creation of the subject is effectively denied and instead the primary issue becomes the resolution of the ideological crisis of the proletariat.

However, even if we accept the ideological limitations of Lukacs’s conception of subject-idealist identity reasoning, he has still outlined the importance of the role of ideology. There is no possibility to explain the passivity of the proletariat within capitalism except in relation to the importance of the ideological factor that is able to justify the domination of capital. Resolving this situation may not require the justification of subject-object identity reasoning, but nor is the problem overcome by reliance on changes to the objective situation. It is perfectly possible to have an objective situation favourable to revolutionary change and yet the proletariat is acquiescent because of the role of ideology. Lukacs’s answer is that the working class can develop the ability to recognise itself as a subject-object of history, this standpoint may be naïve, but at least it is a philosophical attempt to tackle the issue of ideology. In contrast, Meszaros’s objectivism seems to provide no satisfactory answers because to him the objective situation will ultimately promote class struggle. This standpoint glosses over the problem of class consciousness and instead ‘history’ will at some point resolve the issues of the class struggle. Meszaros criticises Lukacs for not outlining a conception of the material mediations of the class struggle; this may be true, and results in replacing the role of the real subject with the mythical subject of the party, nevertheless the ‘idealist’ approach is still able to be superior to Meszaros’s silence on important aspects of the class struggle. This is why the vanguard party becomes the expression of class consciousness in order to tackle the complex issue of bourgeois ideology. In contrast, Meszaros seems to reject the role of this type of party, but he has no alternative to the problems posed by ideology. Instead he has excessive reliance on the implications of the objective. He is able to criticise Lukacs’s approach for underestimating the importance of tackling the influence of capital within the post-revolutionary society, but his own standpoint is undermined by its neglect of the issue of ideology in the class struggle.

Meszaros outlines cogently how the approach of Lukacs underestimates the importance of workers councils both for the class struggle and the development of industrial democracy within the post-revolutionary society: “Yet only through the actual material mediation of such – institutionally articulated and safeguarded – forms of social practice could the tension/contradiction between the broad masses of people……….and the emerging party-state be progressively superseded within the framework of a likewise progressively self-determined productive activity which the members of Lukacs’s ‘conscious vanguard’ fully share – with all its rewards and burdens – with all the other members of the working community.”(35) The party is defined as the expression of the active subject, and the proletariat as the passive recipient of the role of the party, which justifies a bureaucratised conception of the post-revolutionary society. The party becomes conceived as the active mediating agency between humanity and history, and so the role of the necessary and primary important social agency of labour becomes obscured. Indeed mediation becomes the theoretical justification of the substitution of the role of party instead of class: “The category of mediation on its own is quite impotent to produce the required material changes. Transformatory mediations call for the sustained practical intervention of a real life social agency, and not for the self-referential unreality of an idealistically hypostatized philosophical subject in the role of an a priori successful substitute agency.”(36) However, what is to be remembered is that Lukacs is effectively responding to the actions of the Bolsheviks, his philosophical reasoning has only limited connection to what is actually occurring. The development of the party state is an expression of the unfavourable material conditions. What is more serious as a criticism of Lukacs concerns his underestimation of the role of the bourgeoisie in the class struggle. In this context, Meszaros finally admits to the importance of ideology, and also the role of reactionary strategy in order to undermine the development of the class struggle: “Capital’s ability to displace its contradictions works through the agency and mediatory practice of the class which positively identities its interests with the objective limits of this system of social metabolic control. Accordingly, this class is more than willing (and to a large extent able) to adjust its strategies – both nationally and internationally …..when the changing relation of forces so demands, in order to put the emerging trends to its own use.”(37) This refers to the ability of capital to develop strategic approaches that undermine the prospect of the threat posed by labour.

This view partially accepts that important structural changes can occur in order to influence the development of the class struggle, and so influence its ideological trajectory. But this understanding is outlined in determinist terms that suggest that political changes can only occur when the productive forces have matured, and this implies that the strategies of the ruling class are bound to be successful when the objective conditions for proletarian revolution are lacking. This unfavourable situation would seem to imply the importance of the role of the revolutionary party, but this is not the conclusion made by Meszaros. Instead whilst criticising Lukacs for underestimating the ability of the capitalist class to defend the system, he implies that the working class by itself can construct an alternative socialist project. This point also applies to the creation of a socialist society. This point may have some truth, but the educational role of the party for opposing bourgeois ideology, and as a guide in the construction of socialism, is still important. It may be true that Lukacs has over-estimated the importance of ideology, but the role of the party is still vital if the task of overcoming the influence of the system within the working class is to be tackled.

However, Meszaros rightly outlines that a dilemma must arise in the standpoint of Lukacs because of the degeneration of the party. He is reduced to the role of the intellectual who can only offer vague and tentative advice to the party because loyalty has replaced any sense of intellectual integrity and so criticism from outside the party is also ‘invalid’. In this context, an unavoidable contradiction developed between loyalty to the party and repressed awareness that its hegemony could not promote the aims of democracy and socialism. The standards of integrity become to be upheld by ethics, and the ‘Ontology of Labour’ – his later work – becomes the justification of the self-emancipation of individuals. There is an emphasis on the importance of alienation for offering choices to individuals about how to define their destiny. The effective disintegration of the standpoint of Lukacs was caused by the restrictions of Stalinism which meant he had immense difficulty in presenting the system as socialist. This crisis of an outstanding intellectual went alongside the growing inability of the various Communist parties to explain the situation of capitalism and so as a result they accommodated to its imperatives. The assumption of Meszaros was that the philosophical limitations of Lukacs meant he could only reconcile himself to this reality of Stalinism, despite growing dissatisfaction. The alternative is to elaborate Marxism in order to explain those aspects of reality that could not be understood by intellectuals like Lukacs. Thus the task is not to reject Marxism, but instead to embrace Marxism as skilfully as possible in order to provide an alternative to that which could be provided by capital.

PART THREE – MARX’S PROJECT

Meszaros contends that Marx outlined the view that capital would enter crisis when it reached its global limits, but we know that the system can be adaptable and appears able to respond to the problem of the contradictions of its expansionary logic. Marx was not able to comprehensively tackle these issues, and Engels attempt at theoretical clarification was undermined by the interference of the emerging leadership of the German SDP. Marx knew that there was no short-term answer to the strength of capital, via the role of political revolution, and Lenin’s conception of the transformation of the weakest link was ultimately not an alternative because of the very ability of capital to react to these developments: “For it foreshadowed the adjustment of capital’s global structure to the challenge of partial ruptures. And there was absolutely nothing to indicate, let alone a priori guarantee, that such adjustments would turn out to be necessarily detrimental to capital’s continued survival in the near future.”(38) This view would seem to suggest that the question of social transformation can only occur with the maximum and optimal development of the productive forces, which meant the possibility of change after the Russian revolution was still a futile task. But Meszaros denies that this would be the conclusion of Marx because he is only conceiving of historical possibilities which are open ended. Indeed the very maturing of the contradictions of capitalism does not imply an inevitable resolution in the realisation of communism.

Meszaros suggests that on the one hand the total breakdown of capitalism, which would imply the necessity of communism, is a rare occurrence when compared with the ability of the capital system to adapt to crisis. This means that a revolutionary regime can undergo regression because of the ability of capital to respond to this situation and absorb the potential socialist society within its imperatives: “For so long as these transformations unfold on an antagonistically contested terrain, no emancipatory step is safe from the dangers of retrogression, no matter how favourable the ultimate historic relation of forces for the ‘new historic form’ might be once the old order fails to develop the productive forces. While the social confrontations effectively persist, the outcome remains fundamentally open.”(39) But he ambiguously rejects what would seem the appropriate conclusion which is that the Russian revolution was ultimately futile. Instead he contends: “Despite everything, there is no way of going back on the world historical impact of events like the October revolution, since they create radically new equations for all social forces, as well as for the original terms of the theory.”(40)

The tension in Meszaros’s approach is that whilst he seems to suggest the one type of change that has any prospect in realising emancipatory goals are those that relate to the maturing of the productive forces, he also has to relate to the empirical reality of history that has led to revolutionary change in unfavourable objective conditions. Hence he has to resolve the contradictions in his approach by outlining how capital has been able to adapt to these developments and develop opposing policies that extend the limits of the economic system. Thus the capitalist system has adopted measures to promote the integration of the working class such as the expansion of consumer goods, and has also promoted Keynesianism and the welfare state. It has also facilitated the international development of economic activity. However, Meszaros ultimately argues that these measures do not reverse the tendency for the continuation of a process of movement towards socialism caused by overproduction and mass unemployment: “All these trends indicate a real movement towards the ultimate limits of capital as such, and hence they show the historical actuality of a painful but inescapable process of transition.”(41)

However, what is problematical about this perspective is that it is not related to developments within the class struggle. He is unable to indicate how the actions of the working class are bringing about the process of transformation of society. Instead the question of the prospects of change is connected to the interaction of capital with its growing contradictions and problems. Hence what is outlined is an automatic conception of the transition to socialism. The question of transformation is at the level of the objective, and the role of the subjective, such as class consciousness and activity, is not part of the equation. Indeed his prediction of a situation of transitional change is contradicted by his contrasting analysis that capital is capable of adapting to and opposing the prospects of revolutionary transformation. Primarily the problem with his approach is that he is unable to connect any tendencies for change in objective terms with an explanation of developments within the class struggle. Instead the working class seem to be a passive agency that has little relationship to the prospects for undermining the domination of capital. Nor does he outline the significance of the offensive of capital that has ended many of the gains of the working class within capitalism, and so his strategy for socialism is not connected to the significance of the balance of class forces. This is precisely why he upholds an objectivist and automatic conception of the process of change from capitalism to socialism. But the primary problem is that his approach cannot sustain a viable conception of change because of the understanding that capital is able to be resistant and adaptable when confronted with a possibility of the transformation of society. The only manner to resolve this vicious circle is to elaborate the possibilities for labour to overcome the domination of capital. For at the level of the objective the question of change is problematical and complicated by the very dynamic character of capital. However, if we are to conceive of labour as an agency of revolutionary change it is necessary to address the issue of the influence of bourgeois ideology which undermines this development. Instead of tackling this complicated issue, Meszaros still relies on the role of the objective to resolve the outstanding questions of the class struggle.

Meszaros suggests that the principled transformation of society is economic because the question of change at the level of politics or the state can only be partial, and fails to be universal and emancipatory. Hence revolutionary change must be at the level of society, it cannot be exclusively political and the agency of change must be the working class, but it must act in a universal manner to make progress towards the classless society: “This is why the emancipation of society from the rule of partiality is impossible without radically transcending politics and the state. In other words so long as the proletariat acts politically, it remains in the orbit of partiality (with serious implications as to how the proletariat itself is necessarily affected by the rule of its own partiality), whereas the realisation of the social revolution advocated by Marx involves many other factors too, well beyond the political level, together with the maturation of the objective conditions.”(42) Marx’s understanding of the character of a principled revolutionary process involves the effective transformation of the objective situation in terms of the ability of consciousness to adjust to the necessary requirements that are needed in order to realise the economic goals of emancipation. The ability to supersede the conditions of the domination of capital, and so establish the spontaneous functioning of a new social metabolic order, cannot be primarily realised by means of political decrees. The process of the supersession of the domination of capital is a structural transformation that requires the demise of the state and the end of the division of labour. In other words the process of the transcendence of the domination of capital could not be achieved by the role of politics exclusively, and instead requires changes to be primarily at the level of economics. In this sense a society based on the prevailing influence of the associated producers has to be established.

The theoretical logic of the standpoint of Meszaros would seem to be suggesting that the only principled and explanatory society that can be created to replace the domination of capital is one that is generated by the universal and economic role of the working class. In this context, the very partial character of the political party would imply that it cannot carry out these universal tasks, even if it aspires to realise the emancipatory aims of socialism and communism. But the problem for Meszaros concerns the possibility of developing a situation in which the working class becomes sufficiently conscious to carry out historical tasks without the assistance of a party? His dilemma is that on the one hand he seems to be right to argue that only the working class can bring about its self-emancipation, but on the other hand he denies the experience of history that suggests the role of the party is vital because of the apparent inability of labour to develop a level of consciousness that is satisfactory in relation to achieving these historical tasks. Instead of providing a satisfactory resolution of this strategic dilemma Meszaros relies on the role of the contradictory significance of objective imperatives in connection to the problem of the ultimate limits of the capital system. He then argues that these limits can be extended into the post-capitalist society, such as the role of capital, wage labour, state and world market. These limits act to prevent the creation of an authentic socialist society.

Hence what is not tackled is the inability of the working class (because of its limited level of consciousness and activity) to impose itself on the actions of the party in post-revolutionary Russia. Instead of discussion of this issue, Meszaros’s resolution of the complexities of the question is defined by the influence of the legacy of the capital system within the revolutionary society. Primarily, this means in a determinist manner the continued ascendency of capital on a world scale was bound to undermine and compromise the principles of the post-revolutionary society of Russia: “For, indeed, the viability of capital is inseparable from its full expansion into an all embracing world system. Only when that process is accomplished can the structural limits of capital come into play with their devastating intensity. Until that stage, however, capital maintains the dynamism inherent in its historical ascendency. And together with this dynamism, capital retains, of course, also its power to bend, subdue, and crush the forces that oppose it in many ‘little corners’ of the world, inasmuch as its socialist opponents do not produce alternative strategies to counter the growing power of capital on its own terrain.”(43)

Thus it is the unfavourable conditions for a socialist offensive that ultimately expressed the limitations of the revolutionary regime in Russia. This explains the creation of the party state and the influence of capital within that society. But the question is not satisfactorily tackled as to whether the working class has the inherent capacity to bring about the universal emancipation of society. Instead of a detailed analysis of this question, Meszaros admits that there could be tensions between the immediate aims of the working class and their connection to long term goals such as in relation to the demand for the abolition of the wages system. Marx attempts to resolve this tension in terms of the conception of the ‘ultimate abolition’ of the wages system, but the problem remains: “In other words, the accommodating pressures of immediate temporality cannot be effectively transcended by simply re-asserting the validity of overall historical horizons.”(44) The point is: does the working class, as shaped by capital, want to realise aims that bring about the creation of conditions that promote the end of the domination of capital over labour? Is the working class capable of being an agency of revolutionary transformation? Thus in order to resolve this question the demands of the immediate present have to be recognised as valid whilst at the same time understanding the necessity of their transcendence if socialism is to be created. This issue can ultimately be tackled in relation to the complexity represented by the character of the consciousness of the working class. To Meszaros there is no alternative to industrial democracy, but we must also tackle the problem of the relation of the party to the state. This is because we have learnt from history that party control of the state undermines the possibility of realising the act of self-emancipation by the working class. Yet on the other hand, historical experience would seem to suggest that the prospect of revolutionary transformation cannot occur without some role for the party. How do we resolve this complex question in a manner that favours the self-emancipation of the working class?

To Meszaros the failure to achieve emancipation is caused by the inability to go beyond the influence of capital within society. But there is also the problem of a party that becomes corrupted by the very fact of power. Indeed it could be argued that the problem of power is part of the complexity involved in trying to go beyond the role of capital as an order of social metabolic control: “The substance of capital as the materially embedded, incorrigibly hierarchical, expansion orientated and accumulation driven determining power of the social metabolic process, remains the same for as long as this system – whether in its capitalist or in its post-capitalist forms – can successfully exercise the historically alienated controlling functions of labour.”(45) The point is that the strengthening of the state in the post-capitalist society is connected to the development of domination of labour within the relations of production. What has been historically indicated is that the role of the party in the state apparatus is ineffective in order to try and establish the liberation of labour from the domination of capital. Instead only labour can emancipate itself, as Marx and Meszaros, are aware. This means that labour cannot be emancipated by the political act of establishing control of the state by the revolutionary party. However, there is a dilemma in that the role of the state is essential in order to establish the structures of authority within society. This seems to suggest that the influence of capital is enduring within the post-capitalist society because of the difficulties of replacing the state with the society of the self-management of the producers: “It is therefore most important to bear in mind that the perverse strengthening of the post-capitalist state is not a self-sustaining cause but inseparable from the structural dependency of labour on capital.”(46) Hence there is a seeming unresolvable problem in that on the one hand the withering away of the state is possibly unrealistic, and if attempted would result in the creation of a society without legal regulation and a necessary centre of authority, but on the other hand the continuation of the state perpetuates the domination of capital within society. The only answer to this problem is to promote a democratic state that is not incompatible with the self-management of society by the producers. However, this state would not be dominated by a single party and instead would be reconciled with the role of democracy.

PART FOUR – THE ROLE OF LABOUR

The important question that Meszaros has to address is how it possible to know that humanity is able to overcome the domination of capital given the complexity and enduring character of this social metabolic order which has already meant the failure of the attempt to create authentic socialism in the USSR? The answer to this question is that there can be no compromises to the necessity to create a society based on the ability of the producers to determine the character and principles of the economy: “Production is either consciously controlled by the associated producers in the service of their ends, or it controls them by imposing its own structural imperatives as the inescapable presuppositions of social practice. Thus, only self-realization through the wealth of production (and not the alienating and reified production of wealth) as the aim of the social individual's life activity, can offer a viable alternative to capital’s blind self-reproductive spontaneity and its destructive consequences. This means the production and actualization of all creative human potentialities no less than the continued reproduction of the material and intellectual conditions of social interchange.”(47) But what is necessary in order to overcome the criticism that this standpoint is unrealistic or utopian is a discussion of the capacities of the producers in order to ascertain whether they have the potential consciousness and capacity to act as non-alienated individuals who are able to economically organise society without the domination of capital. Unfortunately this discussion does not occur, and instead there is repetition of the view that the development of the productive forces generated by the very capital system can objectively create a system based on need and not profit. In the abstract, Meszaros outlines how a society based on the generation of reified wealth can be replaced by one orientated to needs, but he does not specifically explain how the commodified character of labour can become different and based on a society without the influence of capital.

Thus Meszaros can explain with eloquence the command structure and imperatives of capital, but what he does not establish is how the producers, who are separated from their instruments and materials of production, can gain control and so promote economic activity based on needs and use values. Instead what is outlined a system of exploitation that apparently has no alternative: “Its first moment – the radical separation of the workers from the means and material of their productive activity and self-reproduction – deprives them of any influence on the way in which the specific productive functions which they must perform in their place of work are assigned to them, not to mention the way in which the overall reproduction process is determined and organized. At the same time, the second moment – the necessity to enter capital’s exchange relation for the sake of mere survival – locks the workers firmly into the ruling system, totally at the mercy of capital.”(48) The separation of labour power from ownership of the means of production means the use values created must be at the disposable control of capital. Consequently, the worker internalised needs and the role of use values from the viewpoint of the imperatives of capital: “The worker thus internalizes the needs and imperatives of capital as his own, as inseparable from the exchange relation, and thereby he accepts the imposition of capitalistically viable use-values as if they emanated from his own needs. And worse than that, for simultaneously the worker also chains himself, through the internalization of what he accepts to be his own ‘legitimate needs’, to the fortunes of the ruling productive system so that, in due course, under the conditions of internalized ‘consumer capitalism’, the worker has in fact far more to lose than his ‘external chains’ if he dares to contest the established order.”(49) The overall result is that labour lacks the ability and possibility to control the process of production.

In other words the crucial question becomes how can labour overcome what seems to be the omnipotent domination of capital in the process of production? The very description of the relations of production seems to suggest the impossibility of creating an alternative to the role of capital as a command structure of the activity of work. This difficulty is reinforced by the problem of creating a class consciousness that is willing and able to challenge the role of capital. Instead of discussing these issues, Meszaros relies on a brief description of the maturing contradictions of capitalism that are generating the prospect of alternatives. His conclusion is that we need a non-hierarchical organisation of labour to replace the present situation of the domination of capital. This is a dogmatic answer because it fails to address the difficulties, that he has actually outlined, which undermine the prospect of overcoming the present economic system. Instead the assumption is that the growing contradictions of capitalism will resolve the complexity of the subjective questions concerning consciousness and collective practice. What this perspective ignores is that the role of the contradictions of capitalism has never proved more important than the issue of the collective capacity of the working class, and the related importance of ideology. In this sense, Lukacs’s idealism seems to be more realistic and perceptive than the abstract generalities of the materialism of Meszaros.

The central question to be addressed concerns the character and role of the working class. The problem for Marxists is that the working class does not seem to be willing to carry out its supposed historical role. Thus the alienated domination of capital seems to be preferable to the alternative of the possible failure of the attempt to construct socialism. In contrast, the working class of the Third World is not powerful or able to promote an alternative to the poverty of capitalism. The future seems dependent on a working class in the West that is reluctant to realise the aim of socialism. This situation is complicated by the recent offensive of capital which has placed the working class in the West in a defensive position. Meszaros could have explained these issues, but instead he prefers to emphasise the issue of the contradictions of capitalism. However, he can only sustain this understanding in terms of underestimating the importance of human agency. The result is that he does replicate some of the features of the naturalism of Kautsky’s Marxism. His intention is to re-create Marxism, but this aim is based on the glossing over of discussion of complexities of the role of the working class. The result is that the understanding of the objective situation becomes differentiated from the role of the subjective. Hence the result is inconsistent because on the one hand it is possible to outline the difficulties for labour to overcome its exploited situation, and yet on the other hand still suggest that this issue can be resolved by the imperatives of the maturing objective contradictions. This standpoint is unsatisfactory because it is incomplete and fails to address the importance of the class struggle. The tragedy of his standpoint is that whilst outlining very cogently the difficulties for labour to overcome the domination of capital, he still unsatisfactorily resolves this issue by an analysis of the contradictions of capitalism, as will be outlined in more detail.

Meszaros has the intention to outline how the continuation of capitalism, despite various political challenges, has not expressed permanent domination. This is because the various economic contradictions will ultimately create enormous problems that will mean the durability of the system is brought into question. His standpoint is that these contradictions are an outcome of the very character of capitalism, and so historical development could not have taken any other outcome. In this context the role of the class struggle is less problematical for the system than the maturing of its economic contradictions. However, it will be the task of the working class to take advantage of these contradictions in order to promote the possibility of the realisation of socialism. The starting point for the maturing of these contradictions is the very reduction of human needs into the requirements of exchange value and capital accumulation. Objects of needs become consumption goods that are subject to the imperatives of profit. This means the realisation of need is considered in terms of those that have the money (wages) to purchase goods. However, the quality of goods should not be durable, and therefore the result is a lower rate of utilisation of the commodity. This situation is useful from the point of view of capital because it implies the necessity of the purchase of new goods. Therefore waste is inherent in the system. Hence the more that is produced in the conditions of the imperatives of the requirements of capital, the greater is the waste and the generation of goods with limited use value. This situation creates an important contradiction because capital has an increasing necessity for the role of the workers as consumers, and yet because of growing productivity has less need for them in order to create the use values. The tendency is towards a situation of mass unemployment.

This view implies that the working class will reject the designation of itself as consumers, and instead assume a more radical posture as a reflection of the worsening situation of capitalism. The problem with this view is that it is abstracted from politics, and therefore ignores the role of the balance of class forces and the related importance of the offensive of capital. The point is that the representatives of capital must know that the very dynamics of capital must generate the prospect of class struggle, as outlined by Meszaros. This is precisely why the ideology of capital preaches austerity whilst still being committed to the importance of consumerism and the waste of use values. Consequently, for ideological reasons, people may be inclined to reject the direct influence of the material situation and instead accommodate to the logic of bourgeois ideas and their assumed role as consumers. This is why modern mass unemployment has not led to mass revolts, except in exceptional situations such as the miner’s strike of 1984-85. Furthermore, we tend to view waste as a natural expression of the competition of capitalism, and do not make any detrimental conclusions about the built in obsolescence of goods. In this sense one of the primary contradictions of capitalism does not generate any necessary development of class consciousness. Instead what is actually crucial is success in the class struggle, and this situation will result in the growing confidence of the working class concerning its ability to transform reality. Only in this manner will the subjective factor begin to interact with the logic of the contradictions of capitalism. In contrast, defeats can only reinforce the influence of bourgeois ideology and not encourage people to consider themselves as part of the class struggle.

But Meszaros also admits that the capital system also has the possibility to displace the logic of the contradiction of the decreasing rate of utilisation and waste. This is expressed by the role of the military-industrial complex. It has proved possible to produce an almost unlimited amount of military goods because need is not restricted to humans. It is possible to explicitly devote resources to waste production, or means of destruction, and therefore also create jobs. The problem of realisation of consumption is resolved in this artificial manner, and at the expense of resources for the welfare state. But the overall perspective is that the character of capital can be transitory and that the claim that the existing system is permanent is premature and dogmatic. Nevertheless the limits to the prospects of change are also formidable because they are based on the role of labour: “The point is that without understanding the perverse circularity of the capital system – through which labour as objectified and alienated labour becomes capital, and as personified capital, confronts as well as dominates the worker – there can be no escape from the vicious circle of capital’s expanded self-reproduction as the most powerful mode of social metabolic control ever known in history.”(50) The very process by which labour is dominated by capital is connected to the role of labour within production, and so the ability to understand this situation is very complex and this issue is complicated by the fact that capital can only be undermined by being overcome in all its aspects. Partial attempts to overcome the domination of capital cannot succeed. However, the only principled perspective is that labour should emancipate itself from the tutelage of capital within the relations of production.

Thus Meszaros has elaborated two very complicated aspects as to the prospects for the emancipation of labour from the domination of capital. Labour has to accept and understand that its very production within the workplace only contributes to the generation of the alienating power of capital. Thus it has to understand that this situation cannot continue, and instead labour has to prepare to end this situation of its own self-exploitation. This means labour has to change from being alienated into being a creative force that is capable of achieving this aim. What Meszaros fails to elaborate is that this task cannot be realised without the connected undermining of bourgeois ideology which attempts to justify the accommodation of labour to the imperatives of capital. Thus what is at stake is the question of material action to change the situation of the domination of capital, and the explicit rejection of bourgeois ideology connected to the development of class consciousness. Meszaros creates a new complication when he suggests that capital can often resolve class conflicts in its favour. This implies we require the highest levels of class struggle if the domination of capital is to be overcome.

Meszaros outlines the role of labour within the capital system in the following manner: “The real subject of the production process objectifies itself in the form of capital/alienated labour, and thereby loses its subject character as the ability required for the overall control of the social reproduction process, although in a telling contradictory form it must retain the conscious ability to perform the countless particular productive tasks directly assigned it by the personifications of capital”.(51) Hence the task for labour is to overcome the domination of capital by establishing the control of the social metabolic process. This possibility is enhanced by the fact that labour must already have some control within productive activity, but this development is complicated by the actuality of the subordination of labour to capital in the form of alienated labour. The co-operative character of labour is undermined by the reduction of this situation to a condition of isolated workers who are subordinated to the imperatives of capital. Thus the working class has to emancipate itself from the condition of the normal functioning of the process of production and the capital system. This development has proved to be the most complicated task in history. For much of the history of capitalism workers have accepted their subordination to capital. It could be argued that rejection of this condition of domination has been exceptional. In this regard, Meszaros is optimistic, he contends that capital cannot economically or politically enforce the permanent submission of labour: “The insurmountable problem for the capital system is that it has no automatic machinery at its disposal – neither in the domain of production nor in the field of circulation – to which social labour, even in its fragmented and ‘stunted/travestied form’ – could be subordinated as a simple appendage, willingly submitting itself to the authority of productive and distributive ‘rationality’ embodied in some ‘neutral mechanism’.(51)

The problem with this view is that it is still a massive ‘leap’ to progress from a situation of resisting the aims of capital to then consciously adopting the aim of ending its domination. The history of the working class has indicated many examples of opposition to the perceived unreasonable interests of capital, but this opposition has not been transformed into a conscious struggle for the ending of the capital system altogether. The task still remains: “It is the tangible practical task of removing the paralysing contradiction through which the real subject of production is treated by capital – labour’s alienated objectification turned into the controlling power and ‘predominant subject’ of the labour process – as the degraded object of the societal reproduction process and the ‘living isolated accessory’ to capital’s productive machinery at the present stage of historical development.”(53) What is complex about the situation is that on the one hand labour refuses to accept being a willing appendage of capital and yet on the other hand it is still dominated by capital. The problem is that Meszaros agrees with Marx that even the recognition by labour of its separation from the conditions of its existence will bring about the demise of the capital system is an over-optimistic conclusion. Instead we can conclude from historical events that labour will resist the onerous conditions imposed by capital, but this development will not logically result in the transformation of the system.

Meszaros outlines how this task has not been realised because all aspects of the role of capital as a social metabolic order has not been overcome by the various partial attempts to tackle the influence of capital by social democracy and Stalinism. He concludes that Marx established that only labour can overcome the domination of capital: “For the capital relation as such is grounded on the antagonistically alienated objectification of social labour. At the same time, the capital relation remains unstable, no matter how massive are the forces reproduced and progressively enlarged in it, precisely in view of its insurmountable structural antagonism. This is also the reason why it can be radically altered by reconstituting the labour process in accordance with its directly social character, in place of its perverted sociality under the rule of a separate power of metabolic control.”(54) Hence the perspective is that the very antagonisms generated by the relations of production of the capital system also represent the possible impulses for revolutionary change. This viewpoint is connected to the understanding that capitalism is no longer capable of expansion. But these possible limits to the economic system are not identical to the intensification of the tensions within the relations of production of the capital system. It is quite possible that economic and political changes can develop that will represent the ability of the system to continue. Thus the following conclusion of Meszaros seems to be dogmatic and rigid: “And since the structural antagonism of the capital system is what objectively defines it, in its parts as much as a whole, no substantive change is feasible in that respect within the framework of capital’s social reproductive order. The structural antagonism of the system is removable only through the radical supersession of the capital relation itself which – as an ‘organic system’ dominates the social metabolism in its entirety.”(55)

This conclusion may seem to be logical if we abstracted out the role of structural contradictions from their relationship to empirical events. In terms of actual history we know that it is the ideological capacity of the representatives of capital to present their system as strong even when it is weak, and so generate popular support for capitalism in the very midst of its unfolding structural crisis. The point is that there is often a contradiction between the primary structural contradictions and the role of the ideological and political. The result of this situation is that the ruling class can retain ideological hegemony despite the acute structural contradictions. In order to transform this situation the subordinated classes require a high level of class consciousness which may not be possible under the prevailing conditions. Consequently, on the one hand the structural conditions suggest the historical possibility for revolutionary change but the political and ideological situation promotes stability and consensus. The problem for Meszaros is that he seems to emphasise the importance of the former and whilst neglecting the latter. The result of his inflexible approach is that he cannot relate his methodology to actual events. Instead we have the assumption that the objective situation is favourable for change. Tragically the actual situation would seem to suggest the opposite.

PART FIVE – THE USSR

Meszaros outlines a sound methodology for understanding the character of the USSR, which could not be defined as a type of socialism because the process of the extraction of surplus labour was not controlled by the producers. The imposition of an external political authority onto the development of the economy meant that a new form of the influence of capital was expressed despite the socialist intentions of the party. This situation was not understood because Lenin could not admit to a difference of interest between the state and the interests of working people. The fact that the state was the major distributor of labour power was not understood as the expression of an alienated process which denied the ability of labour to control production. Furthermore, it was considered that nationalisation of the major aspects of industry could ensure the expression of socialist possibilities until they were realised by world revolution. What was not admitted was that the very situation of isolation could undermine the possibility to promote authentic socialism: “In other words their strategy involved the contradiction between two imperatives: first, the need to go it alone, as the immediate (historical) precondition of success (of doing it at all); and second, the imperative of the triumph of the world socialist revolution as the ultimate (structural) precondition of success of the whole enterprise.”(56) Hence it was considered that political power could be sufficient to ensure the viability of the socialist project, and so the adverse effects of the distortion of the Marxist conception of transition to communism could be effectively ignored, such as Bukharin’s conception of the proletarian military dictatorship, and related rejection of the necessity of industrial democracy. What was primarily ignored was that the very centralisation of a distinct state power became the basis to express the personification of capital. It was the state which became the organised justification of the extraction of a surplus from the producers, or the continued influence of capital within society. It was only possible for a non-hierarchical and truly co-operative economy to emerge if the state had the same attributes. But the adversarial role of the state meant that its primary function became disciplining labour within the process of production. This situation represented the political form of the influence of capital, or the systematic extraction of a surplus from the producers.

The domination of Stalin consolidated this process, and therefore the attempt to change this development by appeals to revolutionary morality, or reform of the state, were inadequate. Instead what had happened was the following: “If the politically enforced extraction of surplus labour retains its adversarial and hierarchical character – which it must if control over the labour process is not exercised by the associated producers themselves, - then the objective conditions of labour (which under capitalism are personified in the private expropriation of surplus value) will have to find their new type of personification of capital.”(57) This development occurred alongside the consolidation of the party state, which assumed forms of despotic control under Stalin. The objective basis for the repressive regime, which exploited the working class and peasantry, was the growth of a hierarchical state that established alienating control over the production process, and so personified the functions of capital in the new form of the post-capitalist society. In this context the ultimate explanation for the political repression was the necessity for the state to try to maintain domination over labour for the purpose of the extraction of a surplus. The fact that this aim was not carried out very efficiently does not mean that alternative explanations of the character of the USSR are more plausible. In relation to the ideology of the CPSU they had to present a conception of a mythical society in order to gloss over the actual problems created by the state enforcing the imperatives of exploitation of labour.

In the period after Stalin the one thing that could not be mentioned by reformers was the problems created by the subordination of labour within the relations of production, and Gorbachev was concerned with increasing productivity, via enforcing the strict subordination of labour, but the failure of supposed measures to improve ‘socialism’ led to the increasing emphasis on the superiority of Western capitalism and the necessity of emulation. By 1990 any pretence that the goal was the increased efficiency of the present system was replaced with the understanding that the only practical aim was the introduction of capitalism. The view that this perspective was based on the influence of Western social democracy was completely illusory because the USSR lacked the material conditions for the introduction of a type of welfare state. What was necessary was to replace the limitations of the personification of capital by the party state and the effective atomisation of labour. This aim was not compatible with the role of Social Democracy, or even the political system of bourgeois democracy. Thus restoration took the form of the authoritarianism of Yeltsin, and Meszaros predicts that the restoration of capitalism would not succeed. This prediction was faulty but the analysis is sound.

The USSR was always connected to an irresolvable contradiction because the socialist aims of the revolution were not compatible with the effective development of a state that was opposed to the promotion of the ability of labour to overcome exploitation and subordination to a post-capitalist form of capital. It is true that the period of the deformed workers state (1918-28) meant the subordination of labour could not be fully realised, but this situation was also not based on the perspective of emancipation of labour from alienating imperatives. This tension was resolved by the advent of the Stalin regime that established the creation of a repressive state with the aims of accumulation and the exploitation of labour. This meant any suggestion that a workers state was still in existence became a fiction and instead the party state was the personification of the influence of capital within society. Thus Marx was right to suggest that only a society based on the emancipatory role of labour can be socialist. In contrast, Lenin was wrong to consider that a ‘commune state’ administered by the party was the genuine expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead this state could only be the agency of an elite with an ambiguous relationship to the mass of workers and peasants.

Meszaros is also right to contend that this society could not be capitalist because this would make the aim of the restoration of capitalism nonsensical. Instead it was the inability of the USSR to develop the productive forces in an effective manner, because of the very alienation of labour from the aims of the party, which meant the aspiration to restore capitalism became adopted. The malaise in society meant the working class did not defend what they considered to be an economy based on alienation and exploitation. The Soviet elite became the instrument of bourgeois ideology, and they were full of praise for the market, and increasingly critical of the existing socialist economy. However, the establishment of a Social Democratic stance was utopian because the Soviet economy was too inefficient to create a welfare state. Instead Yeltsin, who banned the Communist Party, was the most suitable agent for the restoration of capitalism.

The demise of the USSR indicated that an enlightened elite cannot introduce socialism. Instead there is no substitute for the role of labour, as Marx was aware. Lenin wanted the elite to be the most dedicated adherents of the socialist project, and in this manner to act on behalf of the working class. This perspective was undermined by the exploitative role of the state and the advent of the Stalin regime. Thus, as Meszaros outlines, Marx was shown to be historically vindicated in terms of the historical example and ultimate failure of the USSR. The only agency for the liberation of humanity is the activity of labour. In this context the conception of a party of labour is very ambiguous and likely to be self-defeating. Consequently what would be the most principled and effective revolution for Marx would be one in which labour acted on its own behalf, and in order to realise its own goals. The dilution of this development by the role of a ‘revolutionary party’ is likely to be detrimental. However, the paradox of this standpoint is that it requires a Marxist party to propagate and popularise the ideas of Marx about human emancipation. Presumably, this party would reject a vanguard role in the post-capitalist society as being ultimately self-defeating and against the interests of the universal act of emancipation by labour.

PART SIX – THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

Meszaros contends that the objective conditions are maturing for the possibility of a socialist offensive against the system. He is aware that the influence of the past defensive posture of the labour movement is important and that this could undermine the prospect of support for a more ambitious strategy favouring the promotion of revolutionary change. But he concludes: “Only when the options of the prevailing order are exhausted, only then one may expect a spontaneous turn towards a radically different solution.”(58) However, even this cautious prediction is over-optimistic because history has shown that a frequent feature is the discrepancy between the maturing of the objective situation for change and the limitations of the subjective factor in terms of the problem of low class consciousness, and the failure to recognise the possibility for socialism. These aspects could be an expression of the present situation because of the unfavourable balance of class forces and the continual offensive of capital against the interests of the working class. The result has been demoralisation and the prospect of a spontaneous revolt of the working class is unlikely. Instead Marxism has to outline an analysis of why the only principled option for the forces of labour is the urgency of militant action that would also promote the possibility of becoming an offensive for socialism.

Instead of this more cautious understanding of what is possible in the present circumstances of the offensive of capital against the gains of labour, Meszaros argues in optimistic terms that the logic of the deteriorating objective situation is ‘bound’ to impose itself: “Nevertheless the difficulties of an adequate socialist response to the changed historical situation do not alter the character of the situation itself, even if they put again into relief the potential conflict between scales of temporality – the immediate and the broad historical framework of events and developments. It is the objective character of the new historical conditions that ultimately decides the issue, whatever delays and diversions may follow under the given circumstances. For the truth is that there is a limit beyond which forced accommodation and newly imposed sacrifices become intolerable not only subjectively for the individuals concerned, but objectively as well for the continued functioning of the still dominant social/economic framework. In this sense, and none other, the historical actuality of the socialist offensive – as synonymous with the end of the system of relative improvements through consensual accommodation - is bound to assert itself in the long run.”(59) Thus Meszaros is suggesting that despite the disappointments of the present, which imply that humans prefer to accept the limitations of the immediate situation rather than struggle, in the long term opposition to the decline of capitalism is inevitable. The assertion is that the ‘socialist offensive’ will happen.

This standpoint is dogmatic for a simple reason. The role of bourgeois ideology can make intolerable conditions seem tolerable. Thus the Conservative government has been able to persuade people of the logic of austerity despite widespread discontent. This popular sentiment of passivity has undermined the development of any form of mass opposition, let alone the emergence of a socialist offensive. Hence, the logic of the objective situation does not seem to create the ultimate emergence of a mass movement that promotes socialism. Instead the offensive of capital does undermine the prospect of mass struggle, and consequently people are both discontented and yet accept the apparent attempt of capital to resolve its contradictions in an unfavourable situation. Hence we can only utilise the events of history in order to maintain that the prediction of the formation of an inevitable socialist offensive cannot be sustained. This does not mean that the socialist offensive might not emerge. But what would make this happen is a process of ideological transformation that undermines the standpoint of bourgeois ideology. In contrast, Meszaros implies that this view is idealist and instead maintains that the end of the ascendency of capital is generating objective conditions for the development of a mass movement of opposition to capital. Instead of this objectivism we would suggest that the objective will only make itself significant via changes in consciousness. There is no alternative to the task of ideological revolution.

Meszaros outlines his perspective in terms of what he conceives of as a universal, global, continuous and protracted character of crisis, and this situation cannot be temporarily resolved by the utilisation of displacements. The structural crisis is concerned with all aspects of the totality and calls its existence into question. The expansion of capital has come to an end in the 1970’s, and has led to increasing instability which has influenced the whole of society, such as resulting in the demise of the welfare state. The crisis of the late 1920’s led to the expansion of capital on the basis of USA hegemony, and so the result of that crisis was the impulse to the development of the potentiality of capital to adapt and continue to expand. But in the present situation we have the growth of the increasing contradictions between the leading capitalist countries, the inability of the military industrial complex to promote capital accumulation, and the difficulty of establishing a stable neo-colonial system. However, as Meszaros admits, the problem is expressing this situation of the depth of the crisis of capitalism in terms of the formation of a movement with socialist principles and adherence to flexible programmes of action. The answer he suggests is the unity of the various projects and issues of concern within the working class around the overall aim of socialism, or socialist pluralism: “For the meaning of socialist pluralism – the active engagement in common action, without compromising but constantly renewing the socialist principles which inspire the overall concerns – arises precisely from the ability of the participating forces to combine into a coherent whole, with ultimately inescapable socialist implications, a great variety of demands and partial strategies which in and by themselves need not have anything specifically socialist about them at all.”(60)

The problem with this conception of the structural crisis is that it is theoretical problematical, and so may or may not be vindicated by phenomena such as mass unemployment and the end of the welfare state. It could also be argued that the forces of capital have important ideological reasons why they insist on introducing measures to undermine the material interests of the working class such as austerity. These developments are accepted because of the ideological hegemony of capital. Furthermore, the recession of 2008 could be considered to be cyclical rather than being an expression of an ultimate structural crisis. Hence capital is still capable of further expansion and has not reached the level of its ultimate crisis. But it is also necessary to recognise that the apparent structural crisis has not influenced the actions of the working class who still accept the validity and efficiency of capital. Thus the apparent seriousness of the objective situation has not influenced subjective actions or views. The creation of the structural crisis has not primarily resulted in an appropriate response because of a low level of class consciousness caused by the legacy of defeats in the class struggle. This means the character of the subjective factor lags behind the importance of the objective.

However, regardless of the relationship of the objective and subjective we can still advocate socialist pluralism, or the unity of the many forms of oppositional currents within capitalism. The problem is that this unity has often been conceived in terms of activism, and the aspect of conscious support for socialism has been neglected and even suppressed. The result is pluralism without a relationship to socialism. Hence demands like ‘defend the NHS’ have not become part of an overall collection of aims that constitute support for socialism. Instead the emphasis is on the importance of the particular demand. Meszaros seems to gloss over these difficulties and instead assumes that unity can be generated that amounts to support for a socialist project. Also, in the name of the criticism of Leninism, he implies that this socialist project can be developed without the role of a Leninist party. But the problem with parties is not their involvement in mass struggles but instead the character of their intervention. What is crucial is the development of a role for a democratic socialist party that is able to listen to the concerns of the activists and incorporate them into its programme of action. Therefore Meszaros is right to suggest that it would be counter-productive to insist on direct political control of the activists, but it is also necessary to suggest that activism without the influence of a Marxist party is unlikely to result in a socialist project. The optimism of Meszaros glosses over this vital aspect of socialist pluralism.

The optimism of Meszaros is based on the view that the objective situation is likely to establish a dynamic of intransigent class struggle: “It is an important sign of the historically changed conditions that these demands and the forces behind them are no longer be ‘incorporated’ or ‘integrated’ into capital’s objective dynamics of self-expansion. In view of their chronic insolubility, as well as their immediate motivating power, they are likely to set the framework of social confrontation in the near future.”(61) Issues that express this revolutionary dynamic concern the wastefulness of the social metabolic functioning of capital, such as ecology and the military industrial complex. However, the problem is that the very supporters of various campaigns that related to these concerns conceive of them in terms of their being single issues. Socialism seems to be a highly problematical and controversial question that is conceived of having little practical significance. Instead the aim of the activist is to persuade the state to listen to their concerns and act accordingly. Meszaros implies that this will not happen, and so the only valid alternative is socialism. The problem is that socialism seems to be a discredited doctrine that is of little relevance in advanced capitalist societies. Indeed the various campaign organisations have only the vaguest understanding of what could be an alternative to capitalism. Meszaros suggests that we need to advocate an open society based on autonomy and decentralisation. The problem is that whilst many activists would support this standpoint they do not connect these aspects to socialism. Only the role of a Marxist party can promote the aim of socialism given the scepticism of many activists.

Meszaros outlines how the socialist strategy is undermined by the acceptance of the supremacy of Parliament because this institution is based on the imperatives of capital. This situation has been reinforced by the effective subordination of the industrial wing of the labour movement to the role of the reformist party in Parliament. Indeed, the conclusion is that the forces of labour cannot be effectively represented because that means acceptance of the domination of capital via the role of Parliament. But the primary expression of the influence and functioning of capital as a social metabolic order is extra-Parliamentary, and this is why it has to be opposed by a socialist project also constituted in extra-parliamentary terms. This situation is related to the fact that because the era of the expansion of capitalism is over, the period of concessions to labour is no longer possible: “Under such altered conditions, if prolonged (as they must be on account of the system’s structural crisis), the antagonist of capital is compelled to contemplate the feasibility of a strategic offensive aimed at the radical transformation of the established social metabolic order. It is compelled to do this sooner or later, even if the process of reassessing the strategic orientation of the socialist movement is bound to be a difficult one.”(62) The problem with this comment concerns the emphasis on compulsion, because it implies the role of rigid iron necessity that cannot be denied, or defied. This rigid interpretation of historical necessity denies the significance of free will and the fact that people voluntarily decide about their options and aims. In this context people will not act in accordance with the supposed compulsion of the structural crisis because of the very fact that for a variety of reasons they do not consider that they are in a deep crisis. Indeed, for ideological reasons they are likely to accept the standpoint of bourgeois ideology. If people do come to accept the implications of the structural crisis it will be because they have ‘freely’ decided to recognise its significance. In contrast, compulsion is something that we are ‘coerced to do’, and so cannot represent the voluntary development of socialist consciousness.

The confidence of success of Meszaros is indicated by the fact that he suggests systematic violence cannot be utilised against a socialist movement organised by the labour movement because of the very dependency of capital on the role of labour. Furthermore, this aspect has to be located within the context of the structural crisis of capitalism: “To be sure, no one should doubt that the use of violence may postpone for a shorter or longer period of time the success of labour’s emancipatory efforts; but it cannot prevent the exhaustion of capital’s productive possibilities. On the contrary, if anything, it can only accelerate their exhaustion if violence is used on a mass scale, thereby radically undermining the conditions of capital’s rule.”(63) This point is true, but it also suggests that the possibility of success against the threat of counterrevolution implies the necessity of insurrection, which Meszaros is silent about.

But the major problem undermining the development of a revolutionary strategy is the influence of reformism, which represents the interests of capital within the working class. Thus the character of the labour movement has to be completely transformed if the success of the socialist strategy is to be feasible. Thus given the role of the structural constraints of capital it is inconceivable to believe that genuine change can be brought about by political legislation in Parliament. However, the situation is maturing for the promotion of the credibility of an alternative approach because of the very importance of the structural crisis: “It must be emphasised again……the historical actuality of the socialist offensive – due to the exhaustion of the self-serving concessions which capital could make in the past to a defensively articulated labour movement – does not mean that the success is assured and its realization is in our immediate vicinity. Being historical here indicates, on the one hand, that the necessity of instituting some fundamental changes in the orientation and organization of the socialist movement has appeared on the historical agenda, and on the other, that the process in question unfolds under the pressure of powerful historical determinations, pushing the social agency of labour in the direction of a sustained strategic offensive if it wants to realize not only its potentially all-embracing transformatory objectives but even its limited ones. The road ahead is likely to be very hard, and certainly not one that can be side-stepped or altogether avoided.”(64)

This comment represents an acknowledgement that the necessity of a socialist offensive does not mean that its victory is inevitable. Instead all that can be recognised is that the situation has some powerful objective features that represent impulses towards the generation of the socialist offensive. But the question of its success depends on the actual and complex events of the class struggle and the level of ability of its proponents to bring about victory. In this context, Meszaros is admitting that defeat is possible. Furthermore, his standpoint does not imply a dogmatic denial of any usefulness to the role of Parliament, rather the emphasis is on the ability of the associated producers to bring about a situation in which they are able to establish control over decision making. But the extra-Parliamentary role of labour is in order to bring about the possibility of effective opposition to capital and the basis to challenge the political power of capital within Parliament. Without the development of this type of mass movement, the ability of capital to be unchallenged will not be overcome. This suggests that even the election of a left wing leader of the Labour Party is not sufficient to alter this situation of inertia and the continued domination of capital in both Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary terms.

Meszaros has outlined in powerful terms why the development of a socialist offensive can only assume extra-Parliamentary forms. But the problem is not his strategy, but rather the possible over-optimism concerning his view that it is likely to be realised. He implies that the structural crisis of capitalism will inevitably generate some form of socialist mass movement. This is a rigid and dogmatic position because we have empirical proof that the protracted period of austerity has not resulted in any conscious development of mass opposition. Instead people have articulated their discontent with the system in a passive and atomised manner, and the trade union bureaucrats have stifled any signs of militant dissent. The result of this situation is that it seems that the standpoint of capital cannot be challenged and that the possibility of opposition is useless. Indeed, this situation is not surprising because the period since the 1989 Poll tax rebellion has been characterised by passivity and the acceptance of the imperatives of capital. This situation has been generalised within Europe. Thus we must question the assumption that the growing crisis of capitalism will inherently be connected with the formation of a socialist mass opposition.

The point is that the influence of bourgeois ideology means that the connection between crisis and dissent has become very problematical. Instead the issue of the development of the socialist offensive has to be posed in terms that are less emphatic and instead relate to the fluidity of politics. The point is the forces of Marxism have not yet been able to develop issues that are able to generate support within the population for the socialist offensive. Indeed, the attempts to develop a socialist offensive have to some extent been discredited by the defeat of the left-wing government in Greece. But, primarily the problem is caused by a passive trade union movement that is led by a leadership that is willing to accept the consequences of austerity. They are willing to accept the measures of the Conservative parties within Europe because they fear the consequences of the actions of their members. This situation is tolerated because of the low level of consciousness of the labour movement. In this situation Marxism is ineffectual and marginal. Indeed, it could be argued that Marxism is a declining force. However, it could be suggested that the election of Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party indicates an alternative to these bleak developments. But under the present circumstances the election of a Labour government is unlikely, because of the very problem of low levels of class consciousness. Instead the forces of right wing populism are growing in France and the UK. This situation is complicated by the rise of religious militancy, and therefore the very role of class struggle seems to have become an irrelevant factor in the present situation. These comments are not meant as a rejection of the necessity of the socialist offensive. On the contrary that is what we objectively need in order to tackle the crisis of capitalism, but the problem is the subjective factor of low levels of consciousness that undermine the very possibility of collective mass action.

PART SEVEN – SOCIALISM

Meszaros makes the valid point that the hierarchical aspects of the division of labour, which are related to the command structure of capital, cannot be overcome without the advance of industrial democracy. He contends that the primary problem is not the complexity of the production process but rather the attempt to overcome this condition is based on authoritarian measures that only reinforce the situation. Marx establishes the principled starting point which is that it is possible to abolish the law of value which dictates the allocation of labour time in terms of mundane specialist roles. This alternative is established by a democratic plan in which the producers determine the allocation of their labour time. The limitations of past efforts to tackle these issues is that they are conceived as being realised by the activity of the party and not as a result of the self-activity of labour. Consequently, the result has been failure, because what we are attempting to develop are material mediations of change, and not the promotion of voluntarist illusions about how a transitional economy is developed. It is necessary to develop a situation in which the producers participate in the social production of goods, and this is a communal process in relation to both production and consumption. The result is that the commodified character of productive activity is replaced with the planned organisation of labour on the basis of the principles of self-determined activity of social individuals.

This approach would seem to be the principled basis of the character of productive activity in a society that aims to realise the process of transition to communism. However, it is only a model and the problem could be that this model has to be modified in order to relate to new and complex circumstances. The question that then arises is to what extent are compromises possible without the aims of production being seriously undermined? Meszaros would argue that the Soviet regime was compromised from the very beginning by the failure to establish the control of labour, but it could be suggested that this situation was dictated by the low level of the productive forces and the problem of scarcity. The unfavourable conditions meant that principles could not be maintained. But what was equally serious was that the Bolsheviks lacked a conception of communism based on the role of industrial democracy. They did outline the importance of the trade unions, but socialism was effectively connected to the role of the state. In this context, labour became subordinated to the imperatives of the state. Meszaros is trying to outline an alternative to this failed approach. He contends that the role of the market, or the process of exchange, continued in the authoritarian command economy because it cannot establish genuine planning which would enable the importance of commodities to be overcome. He is envisaging a society without the domination of the market, the role of the division of labour, and the significance of time is liberated from the imperatives of capital. The ultimate goal is still defined as abundance, but this is not a justification of waste but is instead a conscious rational utilisation of resources.

Meszaros seems to have outlined the principles of transition to communism eloquently. The problem, as hinted at above, is that these criteria are not connected to complex and changing economic circumstances. We cannot choose the political circumstances of the process of revolutionary change, and this may have a dramatic importance for the model of economic change that we may have to adopt. We do have the example of the USSR, which is not to be emulated because of its failings and bureaucratisation, but the crucial question is whether labour has the ability to administer the economy and establish a society without the influence of capital? Meszaros has outlined some of the aspects which can explain the possibility for labour to organise the economy, but what he has not connected to this understanding is discussion of whether labour has the capacity, ability, or even willingness to administer productive activity. We know that the forces of labour were discontented in the USSR because of the command character of the economy but this does not mean that alienated labour is able to establish an alternative of self-management. This is an issue that Meszaros still has to address.

In relation to the question outlined above, Meszaros understands that labour can oppose capital within the existing system and yet be unable to overcome this domination because of the influence of consciousness and limitations of strategy: “Interpretations of Marx’s idea of the proletariat becoming a ‘class for itself’ oversimplified the issue by suggesting that what it meant was the pursuit of radical political action. This was a strategically distorted misconception. For even the sharpest political confrontation between capital and labour can be still the struggle of ‘class against class’, i.e. The political action of the proletariat as a ‘class in itself’ defensively confronting capital – another ‘class in itself’ – and remaining within the parameters of the socioeconomic structurally dominated by the latter.”(65) The point is that in order to establish the pre-conditions for the possibility of change the character of the struggle must become an interaction of the political and economic and not remain on the level of the defensive. However, if the struggle is to be truly successful the aim must be the eradication of the influence of capital over society. This process cannot be limited to a political revolution, however popular, or principled. It is not sufficient to transform the state and establish a new political order: “Thus the real objective of socialist transformation – beyond the negation of the state and of capital personifications – can only be the establishment of a self-sustaining alternative social metabolic order.”(66) The defensive approach of reformist Social Democracy cannot establish this possibility, and instead represents an adaptation to the existing system, and the limitation of Stalinism is the inability to end the influence of capital and its direction of labour within the post-capitalist society.

This standpoint represents Meszaros’s answer to the view that the working class cannot establish a genuine communist society. He implies that it is not the issue of capacity, or limitations of consciousness, that is the problem, but instead the primary issue has been the flaws in the strategies of Social Democracy and Stalinism. Hence the central question becomes the problems created by mass support for Social Democracy and Stalinism. However, this view ignores the reasons that the working class had for supporting Social Democracy and Stalinism, such as trade unionism and illusions in the USSR, and he still has not answered the essential question concerning the willingness of the working class to overcome the influence of capital. Meszaros instead of addressing this crucial question prefers to rebut the view of Hayek that capitalism is too complex to be transformed. He outlines how this view is apologetic and self-serving and he rejects the view that human ingenuity is too flawed to be unable to resolve the problems created by capital. Thus it is possible for labour to critique and tackle the complexity of capital, and therefore overcome the hierarchical character of the productive process inherited from the capital system. The unnecessary complexity of the capital system can be tackled to the extent that the adversarial quality of previous economic activity is overcome by a real process of progress towards communism. The continuation of fetishism of the commodity in the USSR was because the economic system did not establish the ability of labour to overcome the influence of capital. This situation was not because of complexity and instead represented the limitations of the political order, which were projected onto the role of the economic. The real test of the validity of complexity is whether it is still necessary in a situation in which labour aims to overcome the influence of capital within the economy: “By progressively overcoming the antagonistic/adversarial determination of the labour process, qualitative changes can be made in greatly reducing, and in the longer run completely eliminating the enslaving complexity required by capital’s uncontrollable second hand order mediations, as opposed to human need. It is impossible to envisage a socialist reproductive order while retaining the capital system’s existing forms and layers of mystifying complexity.”(68)

Meszaros contends that the attempt to overcome the domination of capital can only be successful if the conditions of production are effectively the property of the producers, and the economy is organised according to the principles of self-management. The ideology of the alienating subject of the economy has to be replaced by the creative role of labour: “The epochal shift in question means not only overcoming the rule of capital in the existing order, but also ensuring that such a change remains irreversible. In other words, it means rendering impossible the reappearance of capital’s command over labour….and consolidating the self-determined activity of the associated producers.”(69) Thus Meszaros has outlined his central conception. There can be no compromise on the view that labour is of primary importance if the communist society is to be constructed. It is not possible to modify this aim without undermining the very project of socialism. In this sense he does not allow for exceptional circumstances, such as war, and emergencies that may necessitate dilution of this principle. Instead he seems to assume that it will be possible to generate revolutionary change and begin the construction of communism in a smooth manner and without any necessity for any modification. This strict view is related to the understanding that the role of capital is based on command of labour: “Thus the alienated control process must be objectively defined as the inexorable logic of capital, which in turn calls for the definition of the controlling personnel as the personification of capital in command over labour.”(70) Hence any attempt to undermine these principles cannot be progressive and in the interests of communism. Only policies that enhance the ability of labour to overcome the influence of capital are necessary and appropriate. There is no possibility to define being democratic any form of economic system that still represents the imposition of an authoritarian command structure, and this situation can only be in the interests of capital and its opposition to labour. The transformation of this situation can only be brought about by the activity of labour, and this is why revolution on behalf of the proletariat is not sufficient: “Thus the positive outcome depends not on the recognition by intellectuals that the historical justification of the capital system is over, but on the material force of a conscious social agency capable of eradicating capital from the social metabolic process, superseding thereby the rule of ‘alien wealth’ over society.”(71)

Meszaros accepts that there have been difficulties in realising this situation. The first has been the limitations of the activity of labour when engaged in its struggle with capital: “Capital’s established mode of social metabolic control has two major assets despite its contradictions. The first is the massive inertia of the prevailing structures, pushing everything to follow the line of ‘least resistance’. And the second, that the only social agency capable of taking up the challenge, labour in its ‘immediacy’ (i.e. in its established mode of reproduction) is also locked into the vicious circle of the ‘line of least resistance’, subsumed under and dominated by the capital’s system’s productive and distributive relations.”(72) He also contends that labour adopts the inadequate standpoint of the personification of labour, without an explanation of why this is problematical, but it possibly refers to the fact that labour acquires many forms of representation that are flawed and limited. The task is for labour to realise its own expression in a manner that would enable it to promote the aim of emancipation in the most principled terms. This means the rejection of reformism. For example: “The socialist movement has no chance of success against capital by raising only partial demands. For such demands must always prove their viability within the pre-established limits and regulatory determinations of the capital system. To talk about parts makes sense only if they can be related to the whole to which they objectively belong. In this sense, only within the overall terms of reference of the socialist hegemonic alternative to the rule of capital can the validity of strategically chosen partial objectives be properly judged. And the criteria of assessment must be their suitability (or not) to become lasting and cumulative achievements in the hegemonic enterprise of radical transformation.”(73)

Hence he is suggesting that illusions in the improvement of the capital system have been the major problem in developing a class consciousness compatible with developing the effective historical objectives of labour. The possibility to tackle this question can be progressively resolved by the understanding that capital has reached its limits and so cannot resolve issues like poverty, sustainability and the rational allocation of resources. Hence, the very illusions in the system are connected to its ability to develop the productive forces. However, this possibility of expansion is reaching its limits and so the objective basis to overcome reformist illusions is being created. What is not explained is that the very legacies of the past such as reformism may still exert an influence over the development of class consciousness, and in that manner the relationship of the objective situation to the subjective is still contradictory. The character of the objective may suggest that the only principled perspective consists of the socialist offensive, but the existing limitations of consciousness imply other options which may include right wing populism as well as reformism and activism. It is also necessary to assume that the struggle for a Marxist approach includes ideological opposition to the various forms of Leninism and vanguard rationalisations of the overthrow of capitalism. Only the unadulterated emphasis on the importance of labour is sufficient as a basis for the strategy of the socialist offensive. This is why he also emphatically rejects the various forms of market socialism because they can only amount to an unprincipled reconciliation of supposed socialism to the imperatives of capital. There is no alternative to the transformation of society in terms of the ability of the associated producers to establish priorities and so express the capacity of decision making.

The market works most effectively when it implements the imperatives of capital and this is why the market is not compatible with socialism. The post-capitalist society of the USSR became expressed by the attempt to impose the authoritarian discipline of the market on labour. However the very ineffectiveness of the attempts to introduce the market in the post-capitalist system meant that it was understood that the logic of the market could only be established with the introduction of capitalism. The only principled alternative is the conscious participation of the producers in the development of a democratic plan and the related end of the hierarchical and adversarial character of the domination of capital. In contrast, there cannot be the reconciliation of the market and socialism. There is only one genuine form of socialism and this is expressed by the control of labour of the principles and organisation of the social metabolic order.

PART EIGHT – THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY

Meszaros is emphatic that the present situation has matured for the objective and material conditions to establish the possibility of the demise of the influence of capital and therefore bring about the system of associated producers. This means successful revolutions are effectively feasible in the advanced capitalist countries. Lenin substantially modified this approach in terms of the perspective of ‘revolution in the weakest link’, which meant this isolated regime would ‘hold out’ until the world revolution developed. He did not envisage that the world revolution would not occur and so was unable to recognise the possibility of the growing contradiction between the revolutionary regime and the proletariat because of the adverse economic and political conditions. Increasingly the emphasis was on the necessity of a strongly centralised state authority based on the vanguard, and so in ideological terms Lenin was able to rationalise the relations of party and class in substitutionist terms. The actual relations of party and class were not recognised in terms of the increasingly subordination of the latter to the party state. The Bolsheviks had forgotten the advice of Marx that the central issue of the development of socialism was the tackling of the problem of the state. This issue is connected to the imperative to transform the conditions of labour. Failure to tackle both issues results in the formation of a state that dominates labour. This means the process of the extraction of labour occurs in the extra-economic form of the role of the centralised state: “By contrast, the post-revolutionary state combines as a matter of normality, the function of overall political control with that of securing and regulating the extraction of surplus labour as the new mode of carrying on the material life-processes of society.”(74) There is no alternative to the role of labour as the basis of carrying out the process of economic transformation, which will in turn also change the state and create the conditions to end political power.

The logic of Meszaros is very reductive and inflexible in assuming that a society based on the economic hegemony of labour would also want to end the role of politics. His standpoint is that politics represents the interests of capital and so should be ended in the revolutionary society. But it was labour which has been to the forefront of the struggle for political rights within bourgeois society, and so there is nothing to suggest that the interests of labour would be most compatible with a situation that supposedly ended the role of politics. This is an anarchist view that denies the importance of democracy, and its role in the mediation of interests which can still be defined as political. In other words socialism will involve political disputes that will require the intervention of political parties, and this situation will mean the role of elections and democratic institutions. It is necessary to remember that it was the monolithic party state in the USSR that promoted the possibility for the exploitation of the working class, and so the role of multi-party democracy will be a necessary situation in order to undermine the development of totalitarian domination. Meszaros does not seem to recognise the validity of these issues because his standpoint is based on the one-sidedness of economic determinism, and this means the continued validity of politics is rejected.

The theoretical approach of the standpoint of Meszaros means he is distrustful of the very ability of the political state to work out the process of the economic emancipation of labour, and consequently he rejects the very role of politics. Therefore: “In reality, the state can only be laboriously ‘dismantled’ (in the process of the political de-alienation and communalization of society) to the extent to which the inherited social division of labour itself is correspondingly changed, and thus the social metabolism as a whole is effectively reconstructed.”(75) Meszaros follows Marx in defining the question of emancipation as being effectively of an economic character, and so the result is the rationalisation of the neglect of political forms in the post-revolutionary society. Thus the central question becomes how to end the alienating social division of labour and important political issues are not analysed. Consequently, Meszaros utilises the apparent fact that only labour can abolish the division of labour in order to deny the role of political intervention, even by the most democratic forms of workers state: “However while labour can successfully overthrow the bourgeois state and take over the control of the crucial political regulators of the social metabolism, thereby instituting the necessary process of radical restructuring, the ‘workers’ state cannot conceivably abolish the inherited social division of labour, except insofar as it directly concerns the ownership of the means of production. Nor can the ‘new political form’ simply abolish the fragmentation and internal division of labour linked to and embedded in the inherited productive instruments and practices of society. For the required changes in question involve the whole process of restructuring itself, with all its objective and subjective constraints which escape the power of direct political intervention to a significant degree.”(76)

Thus Meszaros is conflating two distinct elements. On the one hand he makes the valid argument that only labour can achieve its economic emancipation. But on the other hand he projects this view to deny the necessity of the importance of political institutions, including the state. His economic reasoning also becomes the basis to deny the role of political democracy and the role of parties. Hence he is not sympathetic to the view that a genuinely democratic workers state could assist the process of the emancipation of labour. Instead he seems to share the anarchist distrust of any historical role for the state. Hence he equates the role of the state with the development of and justification of the economic exploitation of labour. Consequently, in an idealist manner, Meszaros relies on the role of communist mass consciousness to resolve these transitional problems, and so he cannot envisage that the truly democratic type of workers state could promote the realisation of the tasks of the economic emancipation of labour. The problem with the Bolsheviks was not that they constituted state power, via the role of the Soviets, but rather that this state was unsuitable for the tasks of promoting the economic emancipation of labour. Indeed the state ideology did not recognise this task, as the ABC of Communism made apparent.

PART EIGHT – CONCLUSION

The perspective of the socialist offensive is not considered to be a short-term period of political activity that raises the immediate issue of the possibility of the overthrow of capitalism. On the contrary because of the very protracted period of the structural crisis of capitalism, the character of the socialist offensive will also be of a similar nature, and it is important to understand that the aim is not an intention of instant victory. Instead what is contemplated is a persistent process of struggle that will involve defeats before the possibility of the emergence of revolution becomes feasible: “The necessity and historical actuality of the socialist offensive does not mean the advocacy of some facile, naively optimistic, immediate agitational perspective. Far from it. For, in the first place, the historical actuality of a process of transformation – as arising from the manifold, uneven/conflicting determinations of an objective historical tendency – refers to the historical phrase in its entirety, with all the complications and potential relapses, and not to some sudden event that produces an un-problematical linear development.”(77) The problem with this standpoint is that it presumes a whole historical era that consists of a conscious struggle for socialism, but this development has never occurred before in the class struggle. Instead we have had sudden bursts of militancy followed by longer periods of passivity, and even the recent offensive of capital has not led to a generalised response from the working class. Hence the possibility of the socialist offensive would imply the creation of a high level of class consciousness that would be unprecedented in relation to the events of history. Meszaros provides no explanation of how this could occur, and neither does he accept that defeats could mean the effective end of the socialist offensive. Instead of tackling these difficult questions, he instead outlines the possibility of the emergence of a protracted long struggle for socialism: “In this sense, ‘historical actuality’ means precisely what it says: the emergence and unfolding actualisation of a trend in all its historical complexity, embracing a whole historical era or epoch and delimiting its strategic parameters – for better or worse as the case might be under the changing circumstances – and ultimately asserting the fundamental tendency of the epoch in question, notwithstanding all fluctuations, unevenness, and even relapses.”(78)

The controversial assumption that is made concerns the apparent ability of a mass movement to correspond to the implications of the structural limits of capitalism. Meszaros assumes that the generation of these limits means the only principled expression it could take is the promotion of socialism. However, mass movements could acquire a different logic and therefore not have the conscious aim of socialism. This outcome is perfectly possible in a situation in which socialism has been ideologically discredited by the demise of Stalinism. The point is that the role of the subjective is the dynamic aspect of the process of struggle, and this may not correspond to the character of the objective for many complicated reasons. For example, the Marxist left has argued that austerity should be immediately opposed, and in this context the issue of socialism is of a long distant character, and seems to be an abstract goal. It will take a gigantic leap in consciousness for the socialist offensive to begin. Meszaros provides no explanations as to how this is possible, except to assert that the prospect of defending the gains of the past is over because of the structural crisis of capitalism. Therefore: “In sharp contrast, under the new historical conditions of capital’s structural crisis even the bare maintenance of the acquired standard of living, not to mention the acquisition of meaningful additional gains, requires a major change in strategy, in accordance with the historical actuality of the socialist offensive.”(79) But, people, at varying levels of consciousness, respond to the situation in many divergent forms, ranging from left-wing militancy to right wing populism, and the difficult question is how to overcome these differences in order to achieve unity in favour of the socialist offensive. Meszaros fails to ask these questions because he assumes that the objective situation will generate the appropriate response. This standpoint may represent logic and rationality but it does not relate to the complex political challenges of the situation.

What seems to be relevant is that the aim of a genuine restructuring of the economy is connected to the development of a mass movement. There are no substitutes for this necessity if the question of the transformation of society is to be realised. However, we also know that the structural crisis does not automatically create this possibility. Instead we have to develop new and more imaginative suggestions as to how this aim can be realised. But what Meszaros has is historical confidence, which seems to have deserted the forces of organised Marxism. Despite the limitations in his approach, the strengths outweigh the limitations. He confidently concludes that: “In the end there can be no ‘half-way house between the rule of capital and the socialist transformation of society on a global scale. And that in its own turn necessarily implies that capital’s inherent antagonisms must be ultimately ‘fought out’ to a truly irreversible, structurally safeguarded conclusion.”(80) To be a Marxist is to support this conclusion, even if we would qualify it with a greater appreciation of the difficulties involved in developing success in the class struggle. But to reject entirely the optimism of Meszaros is to reject Marxism. This is his intellectual contribution to the struggle of humanity against capital.

Meszaros has established the most credible interpretation of the works of Marx that is available. He indicates that to Marx there is no compromise about the importance and seriousness of the aim that labour should liberate itself and so become the agency of the construction of the communist society. The Bolsheviks compromised this aim and so were not able to promote the interests of genuine socialism. Only the forces of labour can overcome the domination of capital, and this process does not require the mediating role of state or party. We may not agree with all of Meszaros’s views, and so have serious reservations about the perspective that capital has reached its structural limits, but we can agree with him that there is no alternative to the revolutionary role of labour. In that sense we are all Marxists, whilst also acknowledging the contributions of Lenin and Trotsky, etc. Meszaros has outlined powerfully how there is no socialist alternative to the message of Marx, but we must question his justification of objectivism as the basis of the success of the class struggle. Hopefully, the merits of Meszaros’s work will be understood in relation to the serious questions outlined in this review.

FOOTNOTES:

(1)Istvan Meszaros: Beyond Capital, Merlin Press, London, 1995

(2) ibid p13

(3) ibid p40

(4) ibid p40

(5) ibid p44

(6) ibid p47

(7) ibid p61

(8) ibid p66

(9) ibid p78

(10)Ibid p 109-110

(11) ibid p112

(12) ibid p116

(13) ibid p127-128

(14) ibid p128

(15)p131

(16)ibid p133

(17)ibid p145

(18)ibid p164

(19)ibid p164

(20)ibid p167

(21)ibid p174

(22)ibid p180

(23)ibid p187

(24)ibid p204

(25)ibid p240

(26)ibid p250

(27)ibid p252

(28)ibid p253

(29)ibid p299

(30)ibid p316

(31)ibid p317

(32)ibid p320

(33) ibid p349-350

(34) ibid p361

(35) ibid p375-376

(36) ibid p381

(37) ibid p383

(38) ibid p439

(39) ibid p448

(40) ibid p450

(41) ibid p459

(42) ibid p466

(43) ibid p485

(44) ibid p490

(45) ibid p493

(46) ibid p495

(47) ibid p529

(48) ibid p539

(49) ibid p542

(50)Ibid p606-607

(51) ibid p611

(52)Ibid p613

(53)Ibid p614

(54)Ibid p619

(55)Ibid p620

(56)Ibid p634

(57)Ibid p639

(58)Ibid p674

(59)Ibid p674

(60)Ibid p700

(61)Ibid p701

(62)Ibid p724-725

(63)Ibid p727

(64)Ibid p737

(65)Ibid p791

(66) ibid p792

(67)Ibid p801

(68)Ibid p801

(69) ibid p802

(70)Ibid p806

(71)Ibid p811

(72) ibid p812

(73)Ibid p812-813

(74)Ibid p911

(75)Ibid p923

(76) ibid p930

(77)Ibid p940

(78) ibid p940

(79) ibid p941

(80)Ibid p976