CHAPTER TWO: A CRITIQUE OF ALEX CALLINICOS’S ANTI-CAPITALIST MANIFESTO

INTRODUCTION

Alex Callinicos is a distinguished Marxist theorist and one of the leaders of the Socialist Workers Party. He has helped to popularise the ideas of Marxism and has produced outstanding work on the approach of historical materialism. His Anti-Capitalist Manifesto is an attempt to produce a Communist Manifesto or Transitional Programme for the contemporary period of class struggle.(1) This work involves an analysis of the character of world capitalism and this critique is not concerned with outlining an alternative because of its concentration on programmatic issues. However we can indicate that the attempt to uphold the Marxist theory of imperialism is flawed by the extent to which it tries to impose a conception of yesterday onto the present. A more satisfactory approach would be to acknowledge the importance of globalisation and how this has influenced the structural transformation of capitalism.

Callinicos begins his work with the assertion that there has been an upsurge in the class struggle because of the development of the movement for global justice and the radical criticism of the inequality and poverty in the world. He argues that this development effectively started with the Seattle demonstration at the World Trade Organization meeting in 1999 and the result has been the increasing criticism of the Neo-liberal orthodoxy of capitalism. Callinicos contends that there has been an ideological transformation and the effective rejection of the historical pessimism represented by Post-modernism: “Nevertheless, the debate has moved on, less because of a decisive refutation of postmodernism (the most damaging philosophical critiques were produced during its heyday and seemed to have little effect on its influence) than because the worldwide rebellion against capitalist globalization has changed the agenda.”(2)

Callinicos is making two important assumptions. Firstly that the class struggle has actually intensified because of the protests against the major institutions of capitalism and secondly there has been an intellectual and ideological transformation of the political situation. This view would appear to be flawed. It is true that the aspect of radicalisation generated in this period did produce the mass anti-war demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq. However nothing had changed in terms of the retreat of the labour movement in relation to the offensive of capital that had begun in the 1980’s. Important demonstrations and protests were not able to disguise the fact that the balance of class forces favoured capital. Furthermore, it could be argued that the standpoint of post-modernism was not the ideological approach of the ruling class and post-modernism actually expressed aspects of rebellion and radicalism despite a pessimism and scepticism about the role of the universal subject. Instead the most important idea promoted in defence of capitalism was the view that the economy was a natural given that could not be modified. All attempts to change the system would result in tragedy and failure. Hence the ideology of capitalism was based on the implicit assumptions of political economy and these were only being contested by a minority of people. The demise of Stalinism also led to the view that socialism was not a credible alternative to capitalism. However there was a critical crisis of working class politics because of the lack of a strategy that could promote the mobilisation of labour against the offensive of capital.

Callinicos’s failure to address this problem meant he substituted the dynamics of protests and demonstrations in place of the difficulties involved in the actual development of the class struggle. Certainly it could be argued that demonstrations can be inspiring and a stimulus for various forms of struggle. But these protests were effectively by various types of pressure groups and they generally did not inspire the forces of labour to overcome their disarray and disorientation. Primarily it could be argued that even if the influence of post-modernism had been undermined and challenged the basis ideological standpoint of the system had not been effectively opposed by a revival of the mass movement. Furthermore Marxism was still isolated from the mass movement and there was a general crisis of trade union politics. However the apparent fact that the forces of Marxism had acquired an influence within the anti-capitalist movement enabled Callinicos to ignore the adverse features of the situation and the apparent inability for Marxism to generate and promote the development of class consciousness within the working class. But in an important sense Callinicos implicitly acknowledge the gravity of the situation in that his manifesto is addressed to anti-capitalist activists and not to working people in general. He effectively considers that the forces of the anti-capitalist movement are a substitute for the more difficult process of mobilising the working class in struggle. (This orientation has again been modified with the onset of the economic crisis and the introduction of austerity measures) Consequently there is a tension between the attempt to uphold the traditional strategy of Marxism combined with pragmatic recognition of the importance of the anti-capitalist movement. We shall be interested in whether he resolves this tension in a principled manner in favour of an approach that can facilitate overcoming the strategic impasse within the working class. The problem is that the very emphasis on the role of the anti-capitalist movement could influence Callinicos towards support for unprincipled politics and the dilution of the strengths of a Marxist strategy.

THE STRATEGIC DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE ANTI-CAPITALIST MOVEMENT

Callinicos outlines what he defines as the most important ideological divisions within the anti-capitalist movement. Firstly a reactionary anti-capitalism that often appeals to a mythical past and can be characterised by extreme nationalism. Secondly, bourgeois anti-capitalism that represents the attempts of various particular capitalists to promote an ethical character to capitalism. Thirdly, localism that emphasises the importance of the nation state for economic activity and that it could represent an alternative to an emphasis on international trade and the global division of labour. Fourthly, the supporters of reformism who advocate measures like the Tobin tax as a financial measure in order to modify the activities of neo-liberalism. These forces are broadly for the implementation of a type of Keynesianism as the alternative to an unregulated market. Fifthly, the autonomists, and they are inspired by the work of Hardt and Negri to argue for the role of multitude replacing the working class as the major agency of historical transformation. They favour de-centralised democracy. The sixth trend is represented by socialism that is generally represented by Trotskyism. He comments: “It is up to socialists to show, often in the fact of hostility from both the conservative NGO’s and the autonomists that their conception of the world is relevant to this new movement – that socialism is a credible and feasible alternative to capitalism, and that the working class is still the decisive agent of social transformation.”(3)

The problem with this strategic and ideological differentiation is not that it does not accurately relate to the character of the anti-capitalist movement. Indeed it could be argued that Callinicos has outlined the process of differentiation in an effective manner. The point is that Callinicos in this outline of the various trends is unable to indicate how the relations between them can be developed in terms that favour the ideological hegemony of Marxism. In this context it is not helpful that he presents Marxism as a traditional doctrine that is mistrustful of new trends like the autonomists. Hence he does not recognise that the autonomists represent the theory and practice that is most amenable to develop consistent and principled relations with Marxism. The autonomists are critical of reformism and seriously attempt to address the question of agency in terms of the conception of the multitude.(4) It could be argued that whilst this conception is critical of what it considers to be the dogmatic Marxist emphasis on the social role of the working class, the importance of the multitude is that it ontologically represents an enhanced basis for the transformation of capitalism. Consequently the revision of Marxism is not in a reformist manner in terms of diluting the strategy of Marxism in an opportunist manner. Instead the aim is to uphold the Marxist objective of the revolutionary transformation of society on the basis of the creative elaboration of the importance of agency. The historical pessimism of much of Marxist intellectual theory is challenged by the view that the multitude is the dynamic force of capital. Hence it would seem that the role of a non-dogmatic Marxism is to try and reconcile the new doctrine of the autonomists with the principles and premises of Marxism. The result of such a creative alliance would be the advance of the strength of revolutionary forces and the undermining of the influence of reformism.

Would this perspective result in the undermining of Marxism? The answer to this question is constructive because the task of Marxism would be to show that the conception of the working class is flexible and fluid enough to incorporate the definition of the multitude. It can be argued that the working class is not a static sociological category that refers only to industrial work and instead represents all those that are alienated under capitalist relations of production. This means it is not a distortion of Marxism to suggest that labour has a contemporary tendency to go beyond the limits of value production and so represent what labour could be like in a future society. One of the tasks of Marxism will be to advocate the development of a strategy that can promote the realisation the potential of labour to go beyond the valorising limitations of capitalist relations of production. In other words, the gains of Hardt and Negri are incorporated into Marxism and therefore facilitate the prospect of closer relations within the anti-capitalist movement. If these theoretical advances are not made the prospect is to define conservatism as the bas is principles. The problem with this approach is that an understanding of the strategic issues of the class struggle are not advanced and instead the tendency will be for the forces of Marxism to draw closer to the most influential trends within the anti-capitalist movement which is that of moral protest and reformism.

Ultimately the influence of the class struggle makes itself felt within the forces of the anti-capitalist movement. The longer the problem of the inability to develop the impulse to mass struggle within the wider society the greater is the pressures of the temptation for the ideological dilution of Marxism. This can result in the formation of a form of reformist Marxism that effectively rejects the importance of the revolutionary transformation of society by the working class. In this context hostility towards the autonomists is an expression of the rejection of the revolutionary approach and the accommodation of the forces of reformism. In other words what is principled within the standpoint of the autonomists is rejected alongside what is unacceptable and unprincipled. Hence the approach that the autonomists are the major ideological adversaries of socialism within the anti-capitalist movement is an expression of possible conciliation of reformism. The longer the actual class struggle is in the doldrums the greater becomes the pressures for the formation of an alliance between Marxism and reformism. This situation is encouraged by the view that the actions of the anti-capitalist movement has replaced the class struggle and therefore the prospect of an alliance between reformism and revolutionary politics will be a massive impetus to the progress of the renewal of the mass movement of labour. The next step is to dilute the programme of Marxism in order to facilitate this alliance of reformism and revolutionary politics.

REFORM OR REVOLUTION

Callinicos argues that the strategy of the autonomists of creative demonstrations has been undermined by the repressive power of the state. They are unable to develop a strategy that can tackle the relations of global and military power generated by capitalist relations of production. The unequal distribution of power is also not tackled by attempts to modify the existing economic and political relations within the social system: “Moreover this distribution means that any attempt to develop alternative economic relationships takes place on highly unfavourable terms and is subject to the permanent danger of incorporation.”(5) This apparently radical comment of Callinicos actually represents his scepticism about the prospect of the revolutionary transformation of society. Any prospect of trying to bring about important changes in the social relations must being within the existing society. For example if workers want to bring about a situation in which the character of their labour no longer represents the imperatives of capital they must try to transform the role of labour within the existing relations of production. The attempt to challenge the abstract and value character of labour begins within the existing relations of production and results in the formation of the organisation of production with different characteristics. Hence the domination of the profit motive has been undermined by the progress of workers control within the existing relations of production. It is entirely possible that this process of change could be restricted and ended by the incorporation of the aims of the workers within the limitations of the existing relations of production, but it is also possible that the situation of dual power could bring about the completion of this process of change with the realisation of socialist relations of production. This process of transformation would accompany the overthrow of capitalism in political terms.

The point is that if the working class did not potentially express an alternative mode of production within capitalism the strategic conception of economic change would be inconceivable. Trotsky is emphatic about the validity of this perspective in the Transitional Programme. If the formation of the new society was not expressed by the very activity of the working class within capitalism the transition between old and new would be virtually impossible. It is possible that the attempt to develop the alternative within capitalism is subject to reformist pressures of incorporation, but this possibility should not represent a reason for rejecting of this strategy of change. The most common form of incorporation of labour within the relations of production is a situation of lack of organisation and the alienated acceptance of the role of being an instrument of capital. It is the very process of acting to overcome this situation of passivity that the working class becomes confident and more ambitious or capable of acquiring the class consciousness required in order to promote the transformation of the relations of production. Instead Callinicos assumes the defeatist posture that the aim of transforming the old into the new is problematical and therefore the working class should assume a position of extreme opposition. However this standpoint does not explain how the working class can become the active agency of change, and instead militancy replaces the principled strategy of economic and political transformation by class struggle and the increasing capacity of the working class to create new social relations by the perspective of workers control.

Callinicos does not deny the social importance of the working class. On the contrary he provides statistics that indicate the increasing significance of the working class to the development of production. But his very definition of the historical importance of the working class does not indicate that workers are able to represent a revolutionary agency of social transformation: “For Marx the importance of class lay in its relationship to power. Capital was, he insisted, not a self-subsistent entity, but a relation: the profits of the capitalists were derived from the exploitation of wage labour. This gave workers, when they organized collectively, the capacity to hit the capitalists hard if they withdrew their labour power and cut off the flow of surplus value, but, Marx argued, workers also had the collective capacity and the interest required to overthrow capitalist relations of production and replace them with a new form of society in which neither class nor exploitation would exist.”(6) The problem with this comment is that it is able to describe the activity by which the workers can strike against the capitalist because of their collective class character. It is the very structural mechanisms of the capitalist mode of production that explain an antagonism between capital and labour and why labour is continually dissatisfied with the wages paid out by the owners of workplaces. But the comments about the ability of labour to act as a revolutionary agency are not located within the structures of the relations of production and instead are dependent upon the conclusions made by Marx. Callinicos cannot indicate how the process of exploitation can generate the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the revolutionary transformation of society. Instead he is able to outline the reasons for the dissatisfaction of the workers with the employers with because of the low level of wages, but he is not able to establish a strategic connection between this aspect of capitalism and the struggle for its overthrow. It is entirely possible to argue that the conditions of the workers would be improved by strikes to raise the level of wages and so the advocacy of revolution in this context would remain a doctrine advocated by Marx and his followers.

 In other words, Callinicos does not establish what it is about the relations of production that generates and promotes the role of the working class as the revolutionary antagonist of capital. What is the structural motivation that would facilitate the working class acting to challenge the domination of capital within the relations of production? Furthermore, Trotsky has already argued in the Transitional Programme that the task of transitional demands is to advance the potential awareness within the working class that its subordination to capital is unsatisfactory and that the only resolution of this situation is by the progress of workers control of production. But Callinicos does not mention the strategic importance of workers control. Instead the question of revolution is defined in the idealist terms as being the conclusion of Marx, and therefore this suggests that it is entirely possible that the working class could modify its subordinated position by means of other methods than revolution. The point is that workers control of production indicates that the structural conditions of the capital-labour relation can only be resolved by the process of revolutionary transformation. We do not have to rely on the word of Marx in order to make the case for revolution. Instead it can be argued that the subordinated relation of labour to capital creates the possibility for revolutionary resolution in the progress of workers control and the related transformation of the relations of production.

Callinicos does criticise the concentration of the working class on trade union issues, but his own approach does not go beyond the emphasis on the militant role to disrupt the power of capital by means of strikes. He does not suggest what could be the approach that connects the economic power of capital with the ability to undermine the domination of capital. He criticises the autonomists for ignoring the importance of class but his own emphasis on the importance of class is dogmatic in that he is reliant on the approach of Marx in terms of textual confirmation of his standpoint but he lacks a strategy that would represent the objective possibility for the working class to transform the relations of production. Callinicos argues that the central issue: “It is rather one of collectivity – that is, of the extent to which the heterogeneous categories of wage labourers can succeed in forging themselves into a collective actor.”(7) The answer to this problem is for labour to become part of the anti-capitalist coalition and in this manner develop a social and collective aspect. But this process would only be a partial answer to the strategic questions facing the working class. This is because the central issue of the retreat of labour caused by the offensive of capital would not be overcome. It is possible for some sections of labour to develop a sense of solidarity as a result of being part of a protest against global capitalism but the unfavourable balance of class forces would not have been reversed and the potential power of labour would not have been exercised. Furthermore the emphasis on the role of the collective as an end in itself is not sufficient. This is because the purpose of the collective has to be defined in principled terms. The role of the collective as a projection of trade union politics has historically been accomplished by the working class and this reassertion of the collective is slowly making progress as a response to the economic crisis. But the difficult task is to connect the collective with potential revolutionary tasks. Trade union politics are not able to make this connection, instead the working class has to go beyond the limitations of trade unionism and generate a different form of class activity and a higher level of class consciousness. This possibility is expressed by the perspective of workers control.

In other words we can define two level s of the role of the collective. The lower level is expressed by trade union politics and actions. The higher level is represented by the acquiring of more ambitious goals and the increasing conscious struggle for workers control. It could be argued that transition from the first level to the second level is the most difficult transformation at the level of consciousness that is possible, but it is vital if the capitalist relations of production are to be changed into socialist relations of production. In contrast, Callinicos considers the question of the collective as a goal in itself and so denies the importance of different levels of the collective. His aim is to restore trade union militancy as an end in itself. We can agree that the restoration of trade union militancy is a good thing, but the role of Marxists is to facilitate the prospects of this militancy to strive to realise a higher end and this end is defined by the very inadequate character of capital-labour relations. The ultimate basis to resolve the limitations of the capital-labour relation is its transcendence by the advance of workers control. Success in this regard will be vital for the prospects of political revolution against the capitalist state. The approach of Callinicos is that trade union militancy will at some point generate the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism, but the bridge of workers control is not present in this schema. Instead in a confused manner the role of anti-capitalism and or strikes will somehow generate the class consciousness for the ultimate struggle against capitalism. What is not recognised is that the highest level of class consciousness is represented by the progress of the struggle for workers control. The greater the level of workers control the more that the pre-conditions for the overthrow of capitalism are being generated.

The strength of the SWP is its ability to try and connect all types of struggles with the task of the overthrow of capitalism, from the global justice movement, to anti-war struggles and the more recent re-emergence of the trade unions. But this apparent flexibility disguises a lack of strategy that results in a tendency towards reformism. Callinicos is able to show the apparent theoretical strengths of the SWP when compared to the ideological diversity of the various trends within the anti-capitalist movement. He is also able to provide arguments that suggest the attempt to deny the important role of the working class is problematical and doctrinaire. He calls for an open anti-capitalist movement that is based on the explicit discussion of the rival strategies, and suggests that the most important divide is between reform and revolution. But the problem is that the limitations within the SWP’s theory mean that he cannot envisage the working class as a revolutionary actor. The SWP is inspired by the October revolution and considers that it upholds the tradition of revolutionary struggle. But its experience has been shaped by the prominence of trade union politics and so it accommodates to this situation as an accomplished fact. Obviously this experience has shaped the experiences of all Marxists since world war two, but the response is either that of accommodation to the domination of the trade union bureaucracy or else the striving for a perspective that would undermine this domination. The SWP has attempted to build a party that could become strong enough to challenge the role of the trade union bureaucracy and establish an alternative political agenda. But the relation of the working class to this process is not articulated and this is because of indifference to the perspective of workers control. The SWP has historically related to the working class by being the best militants, or by creatively calling for support for struggles that occur outside the auspices of the trade unions, but it has not developed this understanding into a consistent strategy that would promote the working class as the agency of social transformation. In a vague manner trade union militancy will become the mass basis for the active role of the party.

The Anti-Capitalist Manifesto of Callinicos does not overcome these historical limitations. But what he does is to try and establish clarity that has previously been lacking. He effectively suggests trade union militancy is not enough, and his answer is support for anti-capitalism. The highest levels of class consciousness are reduced to the internationalism generated by support for global justice activity.(8) Hence support for the SWP within the anti-capitalist movement is the basis of overcoming the corporatist mentality encouraged by the trade unions. But how can these noble sentiments form the aspect of a revolutionary strategy? The answer that Callinicos tries to articulate is the view that involvement in the anti-capitalist movement can promote the values of Marxism and socialism.(The same argument would be made later for involvement in the antiwar struggle) But what he is actually justifying is the view that support for the SWP within the anti-capitalist movement is identical to the realisation of revolutionary class consciousness. This movement is the major recruiting arena for the SWP. But the main questions of strategy are not resolved. The problem of the trade union bureaucracy still remains and the gradual decline of the global justice movement means that the SWP has to relate these arguments to the anti-war movement, and to the gradual re-emergence of the role of the trade unions. But this anti-capitalist turn is historic because it defines the character of the politics of the SWP for the present period. Furthermore Callinicos utilises his study of the anti-capitalist movement in order to define the contemporary world view of the SWP. This process is the replacement of the centrist ambiguity of the SWP with politics that accommodate to reformism. The adherence to a Marxist world view is replaced by a programme and theory that rejects the revolutionary possibilities of the class struggle. Or to put it more precisely the conception of the class struggle is diluted to make it acceptable to reformist preoccupations. This conclusion is not meant in a vulgar Marxist manner, or the view that Callinicos crudely rejects the standpoint of Marxism. On the contrary what he justifies is a mixture of Marxism with the approach of reformism. He still makes many valuable points about the future society of socialism, but his strategic emphasis tends to be reformist. He has resolved the strategic crisis of the SWP by adopting the approach of reform rather than revolution. Despite this harsh judgement Callinicos remains an important theorist and somebody who we can always learn from.

VALUES OF SOCIALISM

Generally revolutionary Marxists do not outline the moral principles they support because they do not want to be criticised for justifying ethical socialism. Callinicos has rejected this standpoint and has accepted that morality can represent an important guide to action and the justification of the type of society we aspire to create and replace capitalism. However the question that arises concerns whether the principles he advocates are the viable basis of the functioning of socialism, or do they represent illusions that cannot be realised? The first principle he advocates is that of justice which incorporates solidarity. He defines justice in the following manner: “Nevertheless there is significant convergence on the idea that individuals should be provided with the resources they require to secure equal access to the advantages they need in order to live the life they have reason to value and that liberties should be equally distributed.”(9) This principle would also suggest that people would act in a manner of justice towards each other or with the ethos of solidarity.

The problem with the conception of justice that Callinicos has outlined is that it is perfectly compatible with capitalism. It could be argued that many individuals start within capitalism in terms of access to equal resources but that the utilisation of talent and ability means that some individuals end up being richer than others. The defenders of capitalism would argue that a socialist society that was dedicated to the provision of equal access to resources would result with some being people being richer than others because of the unequal creativity and talent of some individuals when compared to others. Hence it would be an injustice to introduce arbitrary laws that tried to dictate a situation of strictly equal access to resources. Indeed this standpoint is unrealistic because we cannot deny that some people display more initiative and ability to acquire greater access to resources than others. This process cannot be undermined and halted by the introduction of draconian laws. However the point is does this situation of natural equality result in the reproduction of a type of exploitation similar to capitalism? The inequality of capitalism is based on the unequal access to the means of production, the generation of wealth through finance and privileged backgrounds. In contrast the inequality of societies called socialist is promoted by the situation of hierarchy within the state and the process of planning of production. An elite planner has more control over resources than the workers, and the elite party member has favourable access to consumer goods. The beneficiaries of this situation would argue that this is just because they contribute more to the development of the economic wealth of society. Hence the logic of inequality and injustice of capitalism is reproduced in these societies despite their different organisation of production. The conception of justice supported by Callinicos would not alter this situation because it cannot modify the results of the application of unequal talent and the ability of some individuals to obtain greater resources than others. Thus his formal moral law cannot alter the results of social practice that generate inequality at the level of production and consumption.

Consequently if we are forced to accept that inequality is the result of human practice and activity how will it be possible to mitigate these effects in terms of the creation of a society based on justice? The first point to accept is that we cannot realise justice in accordance with the strict criteria applied by Callinicos and instead injustice will result from the very aim of establishing the equal access to resources of all members of society. Some individuals will obtain greater access to resources because of their superior talent. But we can undermine the possibility that this situation will generate exploitation if the structures of society and its relations are based on the creation of a situation of equality. In other words there is a limit to the prospects of inequality generating a new system of exploitation if the process of the allocation of resources and the development of economic wealth is based on the interests of the welfare of all of society. The dynamic of the realisation of need will establish a limit to the possibility that some will be able to establish domination over the resources of society to the extent that others will not be able to meet their needs in an effective manner. This means the relations of production will have the aim of equality despite the constant generation of inequality in the relations between individuals. Hence there is a balance between the unrealistic conception that all will have equal access to resources and the acknowledgement that inequality makes exploitation inevitable. Instead the character of the process of production and consumption should limit the extent of inequality to that between individuals rather than the creation of a type of inequality between classes because of a differential access to the means of production and distribution. The moralistic conception of Callinicos’s conception of socialism as that of strict equality is unable to explain the type of inequality that will arise in a situation in which the massive inequalities of capitalism have been overcome. The problem with his attempt to implement strict equality is that this aim can only be realised by resort to authoritarian measures by a repressive state. This is the problem of the attempt to impose morality in a strict manner onto the actual practices of human activity.

However moral principles can be applied in a more flexible manner. We would suggest that the approach of solidarity is the aim of relations between individuals in a socialist society. One of the aims of solidarity would be to ensure that the natural inequality between individuals does not result in the reproduction of exploitation. Solidarity is about the promotion of the general welfare of all of society and the rejection of the view that the most talented should be able to dictate the activity of the less talented. Instead the very aim of the most talented should be to advance the realisation of the ability of the less talented and so the inequalities of society would be reduced even if they cannot be definitively eradicated. This situation can be facilitated by the development of relations of production based on the principle of solidarity. These relations of production are those of workers control of production. We know from historical experience that the defence of hierarchy within the relations of production by revolutionary regimes has only promoted the re-emergence of exploitation and alienation. In this context inequality emerges that is similar to that of capitalism and society is not based on the attainment of general welfare. The point is that if justice and equality are to be principles that are compatible with solidarity we have to create a society that has the relations of production that can uphold these moral aims. We know from history that capitalist relations of production promote a conception of justice and equality that conforms to the prospect of the exploitation of some individuals by others. However we also know that an attempt at a dogmatic adherence to these principles can only result in moral inconsistency and the defence in practice of the violation of these principles such as the justification of privilege in the name of equality. This is the problem with Callinicos’s conception of justice and equality. What is required is a flexible understanding of moral principles that is truly consistent, and which does realise solidarity and not the re-emergence of exploitation. The problem with Callinicos’s standpoint is that he does not articulate how justice and equality can be realised. Instead the principles are outlined in normative terms and the social conditions of morality are not elaborated. Instead it is assumed that humans will act as moral being without capitalism. But we know from history that the very violation of morality is possible in the name of socialism. We do not think this is because humans are inherently immoral but rather because of the problems in constructing socialism. The limitations of practice have led to the justification of the dilution of moral principles and support for a morality that upholds exploitation rather than the general welfare of humanity.

The point is that the constant refinement of moral principles cannot resolve the problem of the generation of a morality that undermines the aim of transition to socialism. Humans can actually think they are acting in accordance with the highest level of moral principles but their practice suggests that they are contradicting these moral aims and instead creating a new morality that defends inequality and injustice. The resolution of this problem is not the formal elaboration of better moral aims but the enhancement of the development of social practice. The basic question concerns what type of relations of production could enhance the realisation of moral aims. Hence it is a flaw in Callinicos’s approach that he does not connect workers control of production to the prospect of the affirmation of moral principles. Instead socialism in terms of its character is reduced to the moral principles he defends. It is true that these moral principles can provide a guide as to what we mean by socialism but they can never be the expression of the whole definition. On the contrary socialism is a practice, structures and the related relations of production.

The second principle supported by Callinicos is that of efficiency. He argues that efficiency has been utilised by the defenders of capitalism to oppose socialism. The capitalist system has been most able to efficiently utilise resources when compared to the limitations of socialism. In contrast, Callinicos argues: “The right conclusion is that we should prefer the economic system that supports the widest extension of human productive capacities - widest over time and not just at any given moment – that is consistent with the principles of justice, democracy and sustainability.”(10) The problem with this principle is that we cannot prove it in practice because of the very fact that socialism has never been in existence. Historical experience has shown that the USSR was inferior to capitalism and that it could not seriously be considered to be socialist. The programme of the Bolsheviks of 1919 was dedicated to both the importance of trade unions as the basis for the organisation and development of production and to the role of Soviet or participatory democracy. But it was the very aim of the modernisation of the economy that led to the rejection of these socialist methods for the consolidation of the relations of production. Instead the role of the state and the command economy were considered what was necessary to develop the productive forces in the most rapid manner. This approach became copied by the various societies that claimed to be socialist. Yugoslavia claimed that it upheld the principle of workers control of production but this was undermined by the lack of democracy and the questionable success in overcoming the imperatives of the market.

Consequently the view that efficiency is the criteria of justification for socialism is an assertion. It is an assertion based on the view that human potential is limited by the role of exploitation and alienation within the relations of production. The fact that capitalism can generate the huge expansion of the productive forces is considered to be the expression of this human potential and capitalist relations of production are a fetter on this potential. This is an argument from Marxist historical materialism that lacks empirical validity. It has been the imperative of the profit motive that has explained the rapid development of the productive forces. Marx explained this aspect in the Communist Manifesto. However capitalism also results in crisis, generalised poverty, and discontent, because of exploitation and alienation. Thus we cannot refute capitalism because of the criteria of efficiency but we can elaborate other economic reasons why it should be replaced by a superior historical alternative. Indeed the very conception of a historical alternative is an important reason for the prospect of socialism and communism. We can outline from economic activity that an alternative can emerge from within capitalist relations of production and become realised as a fully fledged social system. Capitalism is not the natural given of history and instead we can provide ontological arguments that establish the principles of the potential of an alternative. The major reason connected to this perspective is that socialism represents the promise to resolve the contradictions of capitalism such as crisis, poverty and unemployment. Hence the question of whether the new system will be more advanced in terms of the ability to develop the productive forces cannot be convincingly argued in advance of its actual establishment. But its goals will be different to that of capitalism. Instead of the emphasis on the profit motive and the competition between different capitals the aim will be the realisation of the welfare of all of society. This aim will be connected to the fact that social ownership of the means of production is the structural content of the prospect to end exploitation within the relations of production because of the general demise of the private ownership of the means of production and its justification of unequal access to resources. As mentioned previously, the new system will not end all inequalities because of the unevenness of talent, but it will attempt to overcome structural inequalities that result in the exploitation of one human by another.

If socialism cannot promise to be more efficient than capitalism it can attempt to overcome the poverty that is connected to mass unemployment. However the historic aim of abundance may have to be re-examined because of the ecological situation. This does not necessarily mean that rationing will be introduced in order to realise equal access to goods. But the democratic organisation of society means that the process of participation can enable the development of a situation in which the members of society decide what is most socially useful to them. This will include goods that could be defined as trivial because the means of escapism are important to people in order to relax and tackle the stress of everyday life. The point is that the planning of production will enable priority to be established in the allocation of resources and therefore the waste and irrationality of capitalism can hopefully be avoided. If goods are near their sell by date it is hoped that they would be given away free in order to overcome the problem of unwanted goods that occurs within capitalism. In other words the point being made is that socialism would be efficient in terms of its ability to met human needs, but not necessarily mean a rapid development of the productive forces. Historically the process of quick economic modernisation has been realised by the harsh exploitation of humans within the relations of production. It is possible that the only way that exploitation can be overcome is by the introduction of balanced development based on cautious economic growth. This will not mean that socialism is inferior to capitalism but rather that socialism has found a better and more rational method to realise human needs.

In other words the most cogent and consistent argument that socialism is superior to capitalism is its promise to resolve the contradictions and most important problems generated by capitalism. The argument that socialism would represent the most rapid development of the productive forces has been outlined by Stalinism in order to justify its five year plans. However its claims were false and production was generally of a low quality and involved large amounts of waste. Callinicos is aware of these issues but he still wants to retain the view that socialism is more efficient than capitalism in modified terms. But it can be argued that socialism will never be able to out-produce capitalism because that production was based on the role of exploitation within the relations of production. Instead the superiority of socialism to capitalism is primarily because humans are no longer subject to anarchic economic laws and instead are able to control their own destiny. The imperatives of capital accumulation have been replaced by the capacity of humans to define what they want and how these wants can be realised. The view that humans must obey the market is replaced by the understanding that the question of the market, or any other economic issue, can be decided by the process of participation and the determination of humans to act together to solve any important economic problems. It is this recognition of the self-determination of humans that is an important reason why socialism is superior to capitalism.

Callinicos argues that democracy is the third aspect of the principles of socialism. This understanding does connect to what has been argued above. However in a vague manner he also suggests the question of how democracy would be realised requires greater thought. It is interesting that he does not challenge the vague views of the other activists in the anti-capitalist movement with what could be defined as the principled Marxist and Trotskyist approach to this issue. Marxism is concerned with how it can realise socialist relations of production and overcome the limitations of capitalism. The most definite answer to this question is the perspective of workers control of production. Hence what is being suggested is that the problem of the domination of capital over labour can be overcome if labour develops its own capacity to establish how production will be organised and products distributed. Furthermore it is acknowledged that the nationalisation of production has not resulted in the formation of socialist relations of production if the aspect of democracy and workers control has not been promoted. This was the historical experience of the Soviet Union. Consequently Marxism has a perspective that challenges the ambiguity of the other anti-capitalist activists about socialism and the character of the future society. Marxists can outline that the ultimate logic of the various criticisms of global capitalism is support for the socialist transformation of society in terms of the advance of workers control.

The reluctance of the anti-capitalist activists to support this aim is because they do not relate their criticism of capitalism to a definite conception of the future. Instead they are often content to say what they are against and not what they are for. Marxism does not support this reticence. Historically Marx was often reluctant to outline the details of socialism because of the problem of utopianism or support for an illusory form of society. But this reticence was actually undermined by the formation of the Paris Commune and Marx acted to elaborate how the Commune could represent the society of the future. His emphasis was on the role of democracy as the central aspect of the formation of a society that was successfully overcoming the limitations of capitalism. Callinicos is reluctant to articulate what he means by popular democracy? Why? The only answer that is credible is not that he is being faithful to the approach of Marx. On the contrary, his main concern is to conciliate the anti-capitalist activist view that many worlds are possible. But this is an illusion. The only worlds possible are that of contemporary capitalism or its socialist alternative. Hence Marxists have a duty to outline why and how socialism can be superior to capitalism. This superiority is related to the importance of democracy and the prospect of the workers control of production. But the latter aspect is absent from Callinicos’s approach and the former is vague and made acceptable to the various ideologies within the anti-capitalist movement.

The last aspect of Callinicos’s conception of the principles of socialism is that of sustainability. His argument is that capitalism is unable to resolve the ecological problem and that only socialism can resolve this problem. However it is rash to almost provide a guarantee that socialism is the answer to ecological issues. All that we as Marxists can promise is that socialism could be superior to capitalism in the attempt to resolve ecological problems. The profit motive of capitalism means that economic criteria are utilised in order to justify the apparent complacency about the environment. In contrast socialism would consider that ecology was an important priority in relation to economic planning. This does not mean that ecological problems will be resolved. It is necessary to emphasise that the introduction of socialism cannot automatically resolve important problems. Instead socialism attempts to develop methods and mechanisms that will facilitate the prospect of the improvement of the ecological situation. But the very fact that nature is not always amenable to the influence of human activity and has its own processes that are independent of relations with human beings means that the question of the resolution of the ecological situation cannot be assumed the result of the introduction of socialism. However the fact that socialism has a motive to improve the ecological situation in terms of its aim of enhancing the welfare of all of society means that it is potentially superior to capitalism in terms of policy and intentions towards the environment.

Hence socialism is based on a promise, which is that it will seriously tackle the ecological situation and attempt to end the damaging industrialisation of capitalism. But Callinicos’s implicit suggestion that socialism will resolve ecological problems represents a dogmatic promise that is inflexible and based on the view that socialism is a panacea for humanity. Socialism is not a cast iron promise of superiority to capitalism and is instead only the potential for the advance of humanity. This potentiality of improvement applies to the question of the environment as it does to other questions. All that socialism can offer is that it will be able to tackle important issues better than capitalism, and that it can construct the relations of production that tackle difficult questions. But it cannot provide promises of actual and instant success. Socialism may fail in important respects and this failure could apply to the issue of the environment. In the last analysis it is to be hoped that the successes of socialism will outweigh the problems caused by failures.

Callinicos concludes the section on the values of socialism with the claim that the anti-capitalist movement can be proud of its diversity and the view that many worlds are possible. He argues that values like equality are compatible with difference. Universality can incorporate the role of individual choice and independent decision making. In general he is making an important argument for tolerance being important to the standpoint of socialism. Support for socialism should not be opposed to decentralised activity and the role of experimentation. However we should not conciliate the view that the issue of diversity is enhanced by the co-existence of socialism and capitalism. We should be intolerant towards the prospect of the continuation of exploitation because it undermines the possibility to realise human potential and promotes poverty and extremes of inequality. Hence the question of diversity refers to what is possible within the context of socialist relations of production. This means the importance of difference applies to different groups of people being able to define socialism in accordance with distinct customs and traditions. Consequently we should not reject the prospect of peasant socialism being compatible with workers control of production. Also within limits private property should be allowed and experiments with artisan co-operatives and other forms of production encouraged as part of the diversity of society.

But there is always a limit to what is possible within any form of society. Socialism has its limits as well as capitalism. Capitalism is based on the view that the market is the major form of economic regulation and so there is a limit to the level of state intervention. Any extensive state involvement in the economy is considered to represent the undermining of the principles and values of capitalism. In a similar manner the approach of socialism suggests that extensive private property and the toleration of exploitation is unacceptable and instead the system should be about the encouragement of socialist relations of production. In this context the saying that many worlds are possible is problematical. We would suggest that the coexistence of many types of world is contradictory and potentially antagonistic, and instead socialism should be one world with many different forms. These forms would have distinct features but they would be based on universal criteria as to what was possible within the context of the development of socialist relations of production. Hence it would be considered impermissible to encourage forms that undermined the progress of workers control of production. In this context individual ownership would be limited because of its potential to generate the imperatives of capital accumulation. Thus diversity and difference would be facilitated as being an addition to workers control and the creative development of socialism, but beyond those boundaries diversity could be considered to be impermissible and problematical. These are the types of limitations imposed by every society and capitalism is actually based on the subordination of diversity to uniformity. In a distinct manner socialism will also unavoidably promote universality and uniformity and incorporate difference within these homogenous limits. The alternative is to allow contradictions that could undermine the very cohesion and functioning of society. This is why allowances for freedom for distinct cultures and forms of economic activity should not become the pretext for exploitation. Indeed this situation will have to be legally constituted in order to avoid the possibility of arbitrary and coercive behaviour. But the laws and norms of society will have to be based on the encouragement of socialist relations of production.

Consequently when Callinicos is making a promise of the possibility of many different worlds he is making a promise he cannot seriously keep. This means he could only keep this promise at the expense of the integrity and development of socialism. The result would be flux and chaos and the inability for a dominant mode of production to be established. But in practice Callinicos does not have any intention of keeping his promise instead in a superficial manner he is trying to conciliate the illusions of the various forces within the anti-capitalist movement. What represents a serious promise that socialists can make with the forces of anti-capitalism. We can contend that within the limits of socialism and its process of development and advance it will be possible to encourage diverse economic forms and these forms can respect important local traditions and customs. But what cannot be permitted is anything that encourages the advance of antagonistic economic processes in the name of difference. Hence if support for capitalism becomes influential and disruptive people should democratically vote on whether they want to bring back capitalism. But until this point is reached the principles of socialism will be based on universality and the subordination of difference.

Ultimately the various supporters of the anti-capitalist movement support difference because they cannot decide which type of society they support. Some want an improved capitalism and others vaguely want a different type of socialism. We would argue that democratic socialism is possible and that its conception of universality would be tolerant and allow for difference. However no society can exist without limits because the ultimate alternative to no limits would be constant conflict and possible civil war. Hence the introduction of democratically agreed laws can establish the limits within socialism and outline the type of tension that is acceptable within society. But society cannot do without norms, conventions and laws. These will determine what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and what is compatible or not with socialism. Callinicos tries to gloss over these important issues in order to establish unprincipled relations with the supporters of the anti-capitalist movement. Socialism like capitalism cannot avoid suggesting what is possible and what is not permitted within society. This is how the question of the relation of the universal and difference can be understood within socialism.

THE ROLE OF MARKETS AND PLANNING

Callinicos is critical of capitalism from the standpoint of values like justice. He argues that capitalism is generally unable to provide equal access to resources and the distribution of wealth is very unequal because of the fluctuations of the market. He is also critical of market socialism because the importance of the market will undermine the attempt to construct a society in accordance with the principles of equality and justice. He also believes that the era of regulated capitalism of the Keynesian character was exceptional and has been effectively superseded by the Washington Consensus and the importance of a market driven capitalism. The only alternative to the role of the market is a system based on planning.(12)

This analysis would not seem to be problematical from a Marxist viewpoint. However it could be considered to represent a dogmatic standpoint that cannot recognise anything constructive about the role of the market. The point is the market varies in accordance with the type of capitalism that it is related to. The early forms of capitalism were based on local markets and the financial centres were underdeveloped. But in the present the importance of the market is based on finance and the role of the consumer. The structural character of contemporary capitalism is based on transnational corporations and the importance of financial transactions. But what is essential to the operation of capitalism is the capital-labour relation and the capacity of this relation to generate surplus value. In this context the supporters of market socialism want to create a type of market that is supportive of the role of workers cooperatives. This aim is not unrealistic if the social relations of the economy are based on the replacement of the capital labour relation with the progression of workers control of production. Hence what makes the type of market socialism that is advocated unrealistic is that it is based on the assumption of a mixed economy of a combination of capitalist enterprise and workers cooperatives. Under these circumstances the dynamism of capital is likely to be dominant and the workers cooperatives will have to conform to this situation. However if the workers cooperatives are the dominant feature of the economy it is possible that a new situation will have been created. In this context the question is to what extent does the market operate? If there is a situation called workers capitalism in which the level of wages is established by the pressures of competition and the necessity to have the lowest level of wages in order to produce the cheapest goods the dynamic of the economy will be based on the aspects of accumulation, market, profit and competition. In this situation all that has changed is that the role of the capitalist is replaced by the hierarchical elite of the workers cooperative. Capitalism is functioning in all but name. However if the market is reduced to being an indicator of the demand required of the particular product it is possible that a new type of economic relations is being cultivated and encouraged. What is crucial is the relation between the market and the other forms of economic activity. The role of the market does not mean by definition that the situation is characterised by an impetus towards capitalism. Instead the market could function within a socialist economy.

Callinicos is arguing that the two basic mechanisms of the economy are the market or the plan. This defines the type of economy that is functioning. But what is also important is the character of the social relations. Is capital dominant or the working class? In this sense we can consider that if the working class is the dominant social force it is possible to envisage a limited role for the market. Indeed the role of the market would be a helpful indicator of the relation between supply and demand. But if the market also dictates the level of wages and tendencies towards competition between different enterprises the logic of the economy is based on the domination of capital. In this context market socialism is a fiction. Consequently we cannot rule out the possibility of market socialism but it must correspond to strict limits that ensure the role of the market does not become dominant. However, most conceptions of market socialism are problematical because they do not envisage the prior revolutionary transformation of society. Hence what is actually being proposed is a different form of capitalism or a return to the role of the artisan producing different types of commodity. This means the problem is with the political standpoint of the proponent of market socialism and not the actual advocacy of the market. An emphasis on the market as such does not mean acceptance of the logic of capitalism. But if the role of the market is suggested within a mixed economy the tendency will be for capitalism to become the dominant economic form. Indeed capitalism remains dominant within the mixed economy. This is the problem with Alex Nove’s advocacy of market socialism.(13)

Callinicos argues that the historical alternative to the domination of the market is the role of planning: “As a first approximation, by socialist planning I mean an economic system where the allocation of resources are determined collectively on the basis of democratic decision making procedures central to which is the majority principle.”(14) This is not a satisfactory definition in that it does not refer to the transformation of the conditions and character of the process of production and organisation of work. An important aspect of planning should be the realisation of the attempt to overcome the alienated limitations of capitalist relations of production. Planning should be an instrument that enhances the capacity of labour to take control of the process of objectification so that work is no longer an estrangement of function from the potential creative capacity. Thus planning is integral to the overcoming of the domination of capital over labour and allows labour to establish conscious control of the process of work and its content. In this sense the democratic character of planning should assume its purpose and character. The more democratic that planning is the more possible is the overcoming of the legacy of the alienated character of work. The only basis that alienated work can be transformed is by the establishment of workers control of production. This means that the decentralised character of workers control has to be reconciled with the centralised character of planning. In the Soviet Union all forms of workers control were effectively abandoned in order to advance the process of planning. This also meant that it was considered to be difficult to overcome the alienated character of work and instead the objective adopted was that work should correspond to the imperatives of the plan. The result was the continuation of alienation in the name of the interests of the plan.

Callinicos considers that the major limitation of the plan was its tendency towards over-centralisation. But this tendency was the expression of the effective rejection of the aim of overcoming alienation and the integration of the worker into the requirements of mass production. Centralisation meant the reduction of the worker into being an instrument of the plan. Hence socialist relations of production became considered to be the organisation of production by the connection of nationalisation to planning. The worker was subordinated to this process. Callinicos is correct that the alternative to this development is the advance of democratic planning but what does this mean? What is the class content to democratic planning? The answer is workers control of production. Consequently the crucial question is how this can be reconciled with the character of the plan. The problem of the over-centralisation of Soviet planning is because the plan is devised in terms of the rejection of workers control. Callinicos calls for democratic planning but he does not specify what this would mean in terms of socialist relations of production. But economic democracy is abstract and formal without connections to relations of production and their class content.

Callinicos supports the views of Pat Devine who calls for the principles of negotiated co-ordination, that represents a combination of decentralised and centralised decision making processes involving producers and consumers as the basis of democratic planning. Devine has developed his standpoint in detail and it seems to be the most comprehensive outline of the process of democratic planning. To this extent it is a welcome contribution to supporting the possibility of the role of the plan and the prospects for the end of an economy based on the logic of the market. However the emphasis of both Callinicos and Devine is on the efficiency of planning, could it realise an efficient allocation of resources. This is an important aim and deserves important consideration. But the imperatives of efficiency could result in the tendency to uphold the importance of elite planners and to gloss over the importance of the input in the producers in the process of planning. The point that seems to be ignored is the problem that the requirements of planning may become the pretext for the justification of the continuation of labour as an instrument of the development of production. Instead of labour being the central and integral aspect of production the importance of the plan means that its imperatives become imposed onto labour and so the lack of powerlessness of labour continues despite the commitment to democratic planning. In this context negotiated coordination may become the latest form of the exploitation of labour despite its aspect of decentralisation of democracy. How can this possibility be overcome? Historical experience and theory does not provide an answer. The history of planning is the justification of alienated labour because of the centralised imperatives of the plan and theory provides models of democratic planning but glosses over the prospects of tensions between the imperatives of the plan and the requirements of the producers.

In tentative terms we can argue that democracy must uphold the principle of workers control of production. Only the workers of a given workplace can define most accurately what is in their interest. Hence the challenge is to connect this aspect of de-centralisation with the centralised impulses of the plan. What would be the outcome in terms of the generalised relation of workers control to the plan? How do we reconcile the possible competing interests of different groups of workers? There are no easy answers in theory and practice but what must be upheld is the aim to transform the alienated character of labour into non-alienated labour. This transformation would enable labour to by creative and to provide its important input into planning. Only non-alienated labour would enable planning to become truly democratic. Hence the basis of answers to all these complex problems possibly begins with the role and character of labour and not planning. The prospect of democratic planning follows from the increasing ability of labour to take decisions in its own interests and those of society. Hence the advance of workers control is what makes democratic planning possible. Only in this context do concepts of negotiated coordination acquire validity and possibility of realisation.

Callinicos argues that social ownership and planning represent a principled type of economy without the role of the market and which would be effectively non-capitalist. His approach has merit but as he knows from the theory of his own organisation this type of society could also represents state capitalism of a type of bureaucratic socialism that rejects the importance of economic and political democracy. Consequently his definition of socialism is not sufficient. What is crucial to the character of socialism is the ability of people to be able to define their own destiny in economic and political terms. This is why it requires workers control within the relations of production and the development of a form of political democracy that enhances decision making by the people about laws and other important questions. Hence social ownership is not sufficient because it could by the nationalisation of a new exploiting class and the abolition of the market could also be compatible with the process of extraction of a surplus by the method of exploitation. Thus socialism is only compatible with the development of a situation in which labour is no longer exploited and alienated and the character of economic development is based on the priorities of working people. In order for this situation to be realised the revolutionary transformation of society is vital. In contrast Callinicos is defining socialism in a manner that suggests the type of society he advocates could be realised by radical reform. The demise of the domination of the market and the introduction of planning and social ownership could be introduced by reform rather than revolution.

A CONTEMPORARY TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME?

Callinicos argues for his version of the transitional programme in the following terms: “Indeed, the neo-liberal policies of the Washington Consensus are driving us in the opposite direction, towards a world where everything becomes fungible, a commodity to be bought and sold for a profit. A movement that is seeking to reverse this process must organize mass struggles to demand measures that would offer both immediate remedies and begin to introduce a different social logic.”(15) This comment shows that Callinicos shares with other anti-capitalist protestors an understanding of what is primarily wrong with capitalism which is the development of commodification and the domination of the market. In contrast many Marxists would argue that what is most problematical is the existence of capital-labour relations. Callinicos utilises his analysis in order to justify a reformist strategy. The strategic aim of struggle is not revolution and instead the modification of the influence of commodification and the introduction of measures that would regulate capitalism and gradually undermine the domination of the market. The proponents of the importance of capital-labour relations recognise that the transformation of this situation requires a revolutionary process in both economic and political terms. But Callinicos utilises his different analysis in order to suggest that the rejection of commodification can begin within capitalism and be represented by the introduction of important reforms. The aim of these measures would be to introduce a different logic within the situation of the continuation of capitalism. Hence the end result of the reforms would be socialism.

This approach is illusory because historical experience has indicated that all reformist strategies with the aim of introducing socialism have failed. The result has been the crushing of mass movements or the accommodation of reform with the continuation of capitalism. What is important in this context is that Callinicos is utilising the standpoint of many anti-capitalists in order to reject the traditional revolutionary perspective of the SWP. Instead the issue of the class struggle is being reduced to the prospect for the implementing of reforms that will somehow have an anti-capitalist logic. An important objection to this strategy is that if the ruling class know that t these reforms are anti-capitalist why would they accept their introduction? Would they not attempt to resist the process of implementation and the proposed trajectory of the transformation of society? In other words because of all these problems would it not be more principled to advocate transitional demands that are more anti-capitalist and attempt to bring about the revolutionary transformation of society? Callinicos answer to that is that he considers the demands he raises as being sufficiently principled in relation to the existing level of class consciousness and the fact that they can generate struggle to realise serious reforms. He seems to be arguing that people are not yet ready to strive for socialism but that they will attempt to realise the various reforms he advocates. The end result will be the introduction of socialism.

We must question his most important argument that his reforms have an evolutionary logic towards socialism. One of the strategic assumptions of many reformist approaches is that the introduction of reforms will introduce an inexorable process of change and transformation that will end with the realisation of the intended goal. This perspective is based on the view that the tensions and conflicts generated by the introduction of the reforms will be resolved in favour of the reformist and that the result will be satisfactory. Historical experience has shown that this understanding is an illusion and that what actually happens is the adaptation of the reformist to the limitations of the existing system. The introduction of any reforms has not led to the completion of a process of qualitative change. Hence what usually happens is the disappointment of those that had expectations in the reforms. This meant the reforms did not have a logic that was able to bring about change. Despite these problems the supporters of reforms have continued to argue that their approach is superior to the prospect of upheaval associated with revolution. Callinicos is trying to reconcile the standpoint of reform and revolution. To the advocates of reform he is suggesting that they should support his programme of reforms and bring about their implementation by means of mass pressure. He is also suggesting to his traditional constituency of revolutionaries that they should be patient and attempt to transform these measures into a revolutionary process. The result of his conflicting advice is strategic confusion but his overall trajectory is in favour of the utilisation of reforms in order to modify capitalism. What is promised is the introduction of a different logic within the capitalist system that will undermine it in a peaceful manner.

However the supporters of principled Marxism should not accept the superficial attractiveness of his standpoint. This is because his emphasis is on overcoming the market character of capitalism and the importance of capital-labour relations is not tackled. We can now understand why he is reluctant to support the introduction of workers control of production which would bring about the transformation of the dominant capital-labour relation. Instead his emphasis is on the transformation of distribution, finance and consumption, or an end to the commodification of capitalism. He wants to end the market character of capitalism but the relations of production are left relatively undisturbed. The result is that the domination of capitalism is modified and regulated but not ended. He is trying to bring about a puritanical capitalism without its emphasis on commodities and consumerism. This would be the prelude to the transformation of capitalism itself. But it is questionable whether this type of capitalism could be allowed to come into being by the defenders of the system. However what he is calling for, an ethical type of capitalism is compatible with the aims and illusions of many adherents of the anti-capitalist movement.

His first demand is for the abolition of third world debt. Principled Marxism is not opposed to this aim but what it would argue is that this demand cannot be realised as long as capitalism continues to exist. The attempt to impose norms of morality onto the process of capital accumulation and the role of finance is illusory and the creation of actual conditions in which the debt can be effectively abolished is connected to the international transformation of the capital-labour relation by the act of revolution and the development of socialist relations of production. His second demand for the introduction of Tobin tax on financial transactions could certainly be introduced within the limitations of the capitalist system. But this would amount to a tax on banking that would not end the excesses of the financial sector and the tax would be levied at an amount that would not undermine the importance of finance for the economy. The main advocates of this tax are supporters of capitalism that want the system to be more ethical. It is questionable whether the introduction of the tax would dramatically alter capitalism, and Callinicos himself has similar doubts about its effectiveness despite advocating this change. The third demand is for the restoration of capital controls. This is a demand for the restoration of capitalism as it was prior to the development of globalisation. It would represent the prospect of the re-emergence of the economic power of the nation state, but the generalised introduction of this demand is unlikely given the trends of contemporary capitalism. Hence this demand is part of the attempt to introduce an ethical capitalism that is unlikely.

The Fourth demand of Callinicos is different. This concerns the implementation of a universal basic income. He argues: “One of the attractiveness of the idea that every citizen be granted as of right a basic income set, say, at a level that would allow them to meet their socially recognized subsistence needs is that it could help to emancipate workers from the dictatorship of capital. Such a basic income would radically alter the bargaining power between labour and capital, since potential workers would now be in a position, if they choose to pursue alternatives to paid employment.”(16) It is necessary to recognise that the introduction of this reform does not necessarily undermine the capital-labour relation. Instead what it does potentially do is alter the bargaining power between capital and labour because the monopoly economic situation of capital in relation to labour is ended. The supporters of capital would consider that this reform is too generous and would tenaciously oppose it. In this context the introduction of a universal income would probably depend on the revolutionary transformation of society. However there are reasons why the working class should be doubtful about the benefits of a universal income. This income is the result of action by a benevolent state and suggests the economic dependency of the workers. The working class is not defining its own future and instead is dependent on a more powerful economic force for its income. Hence this situation would be most appropriate to a type of state capitalism. In contrast the development of socialist relations of production would promote the prospect of working people being able to establish the conditions of their own material rewards and the ability to meet their needs. In this situation the necessity of a universal basic income would be superfluous for many groups of people, although it could still be important for the disabled and anyone else who was unable to work.

The fifth demand for the reduction of the working week is one that is most supportable. It has been a traditional demand of the working class in order to decrease the time devoted to the exploitation of labour. Callinicos also indicates how this demand could be related to the advance of economic democracy: “Wage earners could use the shorter working week not merely to engage in leisure making activities but also to participate in the decision making processes that a collectively managed economy would require.”(17) However it is questionable whether the shorter working week can be consistently implemented within capitalism because of the very fact that it undermines the prospect to extract maximum profit from the workers. Instead a shorter working week is a classical transitional demand because the struggle to realise it begins within capitalism but its successful activation requires the revolutionary transformation of society. Only the end of the domination of capital over labour creates the economic and political possibility to realise the shorter working day in terms of the progress of workers control. In contrast, Callinicos assumes that mass pressure on the state will result in the introduction of the reform. This is possible but historical experience indicates that this gain is temporary. The demand is basically anti-capitalist because it is not compatible with the imperatives of capital accumulation.

The sixth demand is for the defence of the public sector and the renationalisation of privatised services on a democratic basis. This demand should be possible within the limits of capitalist relations of production. It is supported by many people and has become very relevant with the introduction of austerity measures by the Coalition government and the further reduction of public services. However the argument that the public sector is needed by society is vulnerable to the criticism that it is large, inefficient and wasteful. The point is that there are many reasons why under capitalism the public sector could be considered largely superfluous and so it has to be reduced in order to energise the private sector and the process of profit making. In other words the future of the public sector is dependent on the issue of the type of economy people would support. Do we want the extension of the principles of the public sector in terms of the realisation of an economy that is based on the general welfare of society and the meeting of people’s needs, or alternatively do we accept the reduction of the public sector because of the requirements of profit? This issue has traditionally been considered one of reform because of the defensive role of the public sector trade unions and their rejection of the political struggle for the transformation of society. Callinicos is accommodating to this attitude by his presentation of the future of the public sector in reformist terms. But for reasons given the very future of the public sector is uncertain because of the profit maximisation logic of capitalism, the necessity to balance the budget and the problems created by the economic crisis. Thus a principled Marxist standpoint would argue that the future of the public sector is only assured with the realisation of a new system with a different economic logic and priorities. The period of the expansion of the public sector is over because the boom period has been replaced by one of contraction and stagnation. Hence to argue for the future of the public sector within a modified capitalism is an illusion and should be replaced by the perspective of revolution as the basis to safeguard the public sector. Only with socialism is the role of the public sector consistently compatible.

The seventh demand is for progressive taxation in order to distribute resources in favour of the poor and the expansion of the public sector. The aim would be the promotion of economic and social equality. This is one of the major demands that would represent the modification of capitalism in order to realise moral aims in economic terms. The logic of the system would be drastically changed in order to emphasise moral aims such as equality and so end the disparities in wealth that are generated by the everyday functioning of capitalism. This perspective is completely illusory because not only would it never be implemented but also the conception of an ethical capitalism is nonsensical and opposed to how capitalism does function in terms of the generation of profit for the purpose of capital accumulation. It is also necessary to point out that the aim of redistribution through the taxation system is a substitute for the real process of social transformation. To a principled Marxist the only consistent process of change is action to undermine the capital-labour relation and the realisation of socialist relations of production. Hence change within the process of production is the basis to generate change at all levels of society. In contrast the redistribution of wealth by means of taxation would mean that capital was still dominant and the social relations had not been altered. It is also false thinking to conceive that a state that generally responds to the imperatives of capital would implement a measure like the distribution of wealth and the promotion of greater equality. Instead we can only conceive the redistribution of wealth as a measure of a revolutionary regime that was already dedicated to the transformation of the social relations and the undermining of the domination of capital. But Callinicos does not articulate the conditions of this policy of distribution. Instead its moral worthiness is used to overcome any doubts about its practicality. But most capitalist states will never implement fairer tax policies because of the prospect that it would undermine the profits of large companies and financial institutions.

The eighth demand is for the abolition of immigration controls and the extension of citizenship rights. This is the only demand that could realistically be implemented within the present framework of capitalism. It does not undermine the process of capital accumulation and instead represents formalising the fact of international migration in order to obtain work. What this demand does call for is an end to discrimination of people trying to get work in other countries, and therefore legislation would not pander to racial prejudice and hostility to immigration. Hence it is a demand that can be supported by all Marxists but it is not part of a reform programme or the illusion that the capitalist system can be modified dramatically for the better. Indeed it could be argued that the introduction of this legislation would have the ideologically beneficial effect of undermining racial tensions within the working class and so could promote the importance of unity in order to generate common struggles against the power of capital. The alternative is a situation of privileged citizenship that divides the working class into distinct layers and undermines the prospect of unity. Hence we should not wait for a possible anti-capitalist government to implement this legislation instead we should agitate for its immediate introduction. The result would be the advance of class consciousness and the promotion of class struggle that is not undermined by chauvinist prejudice.

The ninth demand is for the introduction of measures to try and improve the ecological situation. Callinicos does not explain how this process could be advanced whilst capitalism is still in existence. The logic of capital contradicts an emphasis on the importance of the environment because of the effect on the process of profit maximisation. Hence the question that arises is either the continuation of capitalism or its revolutionary transformation in order to establish a regime that would seriously tackle the environment. But this is not how Callinicos poses the issue because he conceives of a radical government within capitalism being dedicated to resolving the ecological situation. This government could not continue because the opposition of capital would bring about its downfall, and the masses supporting this government would be confused as to how they should act. In this situation political disorientation would be likely to facilitate the victory of reaction. It is also important to recognise that the success of measures to tackle the environment cannot be short-term and may even require generations in order to assess their success. This is why the inherently temporary and instable character of an anti-capitalist government cannot establish the criteria to measure success. Only the establishment of a stable and successful socialist society can ensure the economic and political harmony that will enable society to introduce important measures to tackle environmental problems. It is also necessary to point out that the possibility of success will be complex and good results may be problematical because of the scale of the problems inherited from the past.

The tenth demand is for the end of the military-industrial complex which includes the demise of NATO, universal nuclear disarmament and drastic cuts to arms budgets. The result will be the undermining of geo-political competition. To argue that this is a reform that can be accomplished by a government exiting within the limitations of capitalism is ludicrous. What is being advocated is the imposition of a programme of world socialist society within an entirely different context. The demand is that a society that is still national and capitalist should bring an end to geo-political conflicts. It is important to recognise that the economic power of global capital is connected to military power and so the demise of this military might would be connected to the advance of the process of world revolution. It is also necessary to recognise that as long as the USA still exists in its present form the basis for the continuation of the military-industrial complex will still be present. The point is that only the reconstruction of the state to the extent that it has different aims can facilitate the creation of a situation in which the role of coercion is no longer dominant. This possibility can only be realised by the revolutionary transformation of society and the establishment of a different type of state with new aims and intentions. In this context the role of an armed militia will replace the military-industrial complex that was connected to the imperatives of capital accumulation. But an anti-capitalist government would still act within the context of the continuation of the power of military might and the logic of capital accumulation. The attempt to end the military-industrial complex would not be possible because of the opposition of the army and the political establishment. What is required to realise this aim is the establishment of a different society that functions in a different manner and has new geo-political objectives such as the advance of peace and the resolution of conflict. This possibility can only be created by the revolutionary transformation of society and the advance of the struggle for socialism in international terms.

The last demand is for support of civil liberties. This is a demand that can be defended unconditionally within any society. Within capitalism there is a constant tendency to undermine the importance of civil liberties and so there is a necessity for constant concern about the state of civil liberties. It would also be important for any left-wing government to defend civil liberties. But it also has to be argued that the most effective manner in which civil liberties can be upheld is not by the establishment of an insecure and unstable anti-capitalist government but instead by the formation of a successful socialist society. Socialism based on democracy and participation would be the context in which civil rights could be best upheld. It is true that Stalinism in the past has not supported civil rights but this is because it represented a despotic regime that was based on the rule of a monolithic party. Genuine socialism would not repeat this experience and instead attempt to establish real democracy with the efficient functioning of the economy. The result is a society that is superior to capitalism. In contrast, Callinicos has diluted this aim and instead argues that the most immediate priority is the formation of an anti-capitalist government that aims to realise a collection of reforms. However the problem is that some of the reforms he supports are not actually reforms and can only seriously be realised by a socialist society, and the other reforms are not necessarily anti-capitalist and with a dynamic towards socialism. The result is a strategic confusion and impasse that cannot represent a process of change towards socialism. Some of the supporters of the anti-capitalist movement and the public would consider the programme of demands to be self-limiting and so should be realised within capitalism. Other people would consider the demands to be the prelude to socialism. The result would be a split because of these strategic tensions. It will only be possible to avoid these contradictions by building a mass movement with the explicit aim of socialism via the act of revolution.

 Callinicos rejects this approach because he thinks that a mass movement can only be built that is initially cautious in relation to its attitude towards revolution. He tries to combine ambitious demands with moderation in strategic aims. The result is an emphasis on reform but the ultimate logic of this reform is the transformation of society. However historical experience has indicated that support for reforms is at the expense of more ambitious revolutionary aims. The former acquires a prominence that undermines the importance of the latter. What is his answer to these criticisms? He argues that his strategy is based on the importance of the results obtained by mass movements. This pressure can extract reforms from the state: “States are part of the capitalist system not a countervailing power to it. But states, because they are at least partially dependent on securing the consent of their subjects, are vulnerable to political pressure from below. Mass movement s can extract reforms from them.”(18) These concessions will be the result of struggle and not negotiations, and the process will be based on the social power of the working class. But in order to provide credibility to this approach the implicit assumption is that a government will be developed that will be sympathetic to these demands. This is because it is irrational to expect that reactionary governments will be ready to implement anti-capitalist demands. Hence the role of mass struggle from below must have a governmental dynamic of trying to bring about a situation in which the actions of the representatives of the state are sympathetic to the aspirations of the mass movement. The traditional hegemony of the established parties will be replaced by more left-wing forces even if the process is still based on the importance of mass pressure from below.

Consequently, the assumption is that revolution is not necessarily required in order to realise the success of this strategy. It will be possible to develop a situation in which the existing state acts in response to the forces of pressure from below. This means at some point the government will correspond to the character of the mass movement. Callinicos is aware that this situation might lead to the incorporation of the movement within the limits of the role of the state, but he says that the alternative is sectarianism and dogmatism. However we would argue that a characteristic of dogmatism is the refusal to engage with the mass movement because of an emphasis on rigid principles. In this contest there is nothing sectarian in upholding the view that the mass movement will be defeated and undermined if its objectives are primarily reforms. Not only has it been difficult to implement reforms but also the character of contemporary capitalism is hostile to the introduction of reforms. In this context the programme of Callinicos is based on his adaptation to the illusions of the anti-capitalist movement rather than the generation of a serious strategy that would have chances of success. This means we would argue that a mass movement that was determined to implement revolutionary objectives, and had an offensive strategy to support this approach, would have more of a chance of success than a movement that aimed to put pressure on the state in the interests of reforms.

Callinicos attempts to disarm his critics by arguing that his approach is based on an anti-capitalist logic. They are demands that undermine the logic of capital: “In other words while not necessarily formulated for anti-capitalist reasons, these demands have an implicit anti-capitalist dynamic. They are what Trotsky called transitional demands, reforms that emerge from the realities of existing struggles but whose implementation in the current context would challenge capitalist economic relations.”(19) The point that arises from this understanding is why didn’t Callinicos advocate demands that had the actual logic of the revolutionary transformation of society, which is how Trotsky envisaged the character of the transitional demands he formulated in his programme? Instead of this definite content to demands he prefers to outline demands that have an ambiguous relation to both capitalism and socialism. The result is confusion. Is he advocating the end of capitalism and its replacement by socialism or the realisation of demands by an anti-capitalist government that is not yet dedicated to the introduction of socialism? Thus what does the word logic mean? Is this a word that refers to short-term process of change prior to a revolution or does it represent a longer period and only the success of reforms would introduce a dynamic that would make the transformation of capitalism possible?

It is important to note that unlike the strategic ambiguities in the approach of Callinicos, Trotsky defines the various transitional demands of his programme as revolutionary because the success of these demands would be based on mass mobilisation that would create a revolutionary situation. The only way to consolidate the prospect of the introduction by these demands would be if the working class was aiming to realise revolution and overthrow capitalism. There is nothing evolutionary about these demands instead the dynamics of these demands is premised by the prospect of the end to capitalism. This is why they are not reforms premised on the continuation of capitalism and instead are transitional in relation to the realisation of a new society. In contrast Callinicos argues that the implementation of his reforms would create a choice, the nation state that has introduced the reforms could accommodate to resistance, or it could go on and accept the perspective of revolution. The latter option would be a revolution because it would have to overcome the resistance of capital and be based on the mass mobilisation of the working class in favour of the transformation of society. However we know from historical experience that governments in this situation have often accommodated to the forces of reaction and have preferred defeat in comparison to the prospect of revolutionary transformation. This situation has arisen because even the most radical of movements have established control of the capitalist state rather than facilitated the progress of the revolutionary transformation of society. This means the apparent anti-capitalist logic of the demands they have been supporting has not facilitated the overthrow of capitalism and instead the demands have been diluted by a process of incorporation into the requirements of the state and capital accumulation. The mass movement has not been strong enough to withstand and oppose this process of adaptation by the government to the imperatives of the existing state and economic system.

The approach of Callinicos would create his own form of strategic tensions that would not facilitate the process of the overthrow of capitalism. He also puts emphasis on the role of a left-wing government, and assumes that mass pressure will ensure that this government acts in an increasingly radical and revolutionary manner. Hence he upholds a recipe for defeat. The only principled and intransigent revolutionary process is when the mass movement itself creates the organs of economic and political power and becomes conscious of the prospect of utilising these organs in favour of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Hence the aim is not to utilise the existing bourgeois state in a revolutionary manner and instead to overthrow this state and create a new revolutionary state power. Furthermore the aim of the mass movement is not the introduction of reforms but to generate the increasing social power of mass organs and to establish a rival to the existing state. Callinicos dilutes this process of change with his emphasis on the role of reforms and the importance of a left-wing government. The mass movement becomes a supporting actor to this process of the apparent dynamics of evolutionary change, and its influence is sufficient to create inevitable change because the forces of reaction are weaker than the mass movement in motion. It is assumed that in a situation of political conflict the forces of progress will be able to defeat reaction if they are sufficiently determined. However this assumption ignores the precedent of historical experience and that the pressure of reaction has generally defeated left wing governments and mass movements. Instead of recognising the importance of this experience, Callinicos outlines a schema of development and expects reality to conform to it. The discrepancy between reality and theory is not explained and instead the limitations of the practice of left-wing governments is replaced by the conception of the dynamic of anti-capitalism and the imperatives of reform to become revolutionary and the inherent basis of the transformation of society. The fact that reforms have generally demobilised the mass movement is not explained.

In other words, Callinicos has the strategic assumption that reforms will become revolutionary. The historical limited character of reforms, the fact that reforms are often utilised to discredit the conception of revolution is not articulated. Instead he is able to outline what he perceives to be the anti-capitalist content of reforms and how they acquire a revolutionary momentum. This is why he argues that reforms are genuinely transitional and the means by which a bridge is established between capitalism and socialism. The fact that generally reforms are utilised in order to make people accept capitalism is not explained by his standpoint and instead they assume an evolutionary logic of change. This means the problems and contradictions of the class struggle are minimised and instead the favourable prospects of change are highlighted. The choice is between the acceptance of the increasing ability of reforms to modify and transform capitalism or accept the domination of capital. The imperatives of evolution seem to favour the success of the former: “The revolutionary choice is really this: should these democratic forms of self-organization progressively take over the management of the economy in order to replace the logic of capital with the claims of need, or should they limit themselves to serving as a humane supplement to the market, in which case all historical experience suggests that the two logics cannot indefinitely coexist and the empire of the market will, sooner or later re-establish itself.”(20)

 In other words the introduction of reforms will inaugurate a dynamic of change that ultimately create a choice between the continuation of reforms and the complete realisation of social transformation, or capitulation to reaction. The assumption is that the advance of progress via reforms is too strong and vibrant for the counterrevolution to be victorious. Hence the role of reforms has replaced the importance of revolution because reforms themselves have revolutionary consequences. The collection of the reforms introduced has brought about a situation in which the alternative logic of capitalism is weaker and has created the conditions for the definitive movement to a new society. All that the mass movement has to do is to ensure that the government is prepared to continue to support reforms until the process of completion. This means that revolution is the completion of an evolutionary process of change and the necessity of rupture and acute conflict has been replaced by the accumulative influence of the introduction of the various reforms. It is also being assumed that the character of the state does not have to change in order for the process of transformation to be generated and supported. The progressive change has been sponsored by a form of the bourgeois state, and mass movement has to ensure that the momentum of the implementation of the reforms continues and is not halted. The constant development of the introduction of reforms is identical to revolution and therefore the accumulation of quantitative change is equivalent to qualitative change. Hence the qualitative change of revolution is not in any way distinct from the implementation of reforms.

This strategy is illusory. No reformist movement has succeeded in bringing about revolutionary change. Instead only a mass movement that recognised that reforms were not sufficient has supported a strategy that has established revolutionary change. It is true that the process of revolutionary change can begin within the existing relations of production. But the aim is not gradual modification and evolutionary improvement and instead the development of alternative social power has the aim of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing system. In this context the aim of transitional demands is not the reform of capitalism but instead to facilitate the change in the balance of class forces in order to make revolution possible. The approach of Callinicos is that change within the existing system will establish a dynamic of ultimate social transformation. In contrast, the content of the struggle for transitional demands is to prepare the prospect for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. The emphasis is on the connection between the present and future. In contrast the emphasis of Callinicos is on what can be done in the present.

The above analysis is meant to outline limitations in Callinicos’s conception of the transition from capitalism to socialism. However the alternative strategy has not been elaborated. Hence the conception of what is meant by a revolutionary approach is not explicitly apparent. Instead it is only being justified in terms of criticism of the alternative presented by Callinicos. It is necessary to emphasise that the revolutionary process is characterised by people voluntarily supporting the aim of social transformation. If this aim is not supported and only a tiny minority of people advocate revolution it will not happen. Revolution can only occur if it is the outcome of mass struggle and has the voluntary support of the majority of the population. This means the aims of revolution must be popular and be capable of acquiring mass support. It is possible that what becomes a revolution can begin with criticism of the limitations of capitalism but the outcome of this criticism must be to articulate what people support as an historical alternative. In this context the transitional demands of Callinicos did not establish a logical relation to what could be and instead were demands that were being advocated because of their anti-capitalist content. For example what was the relation between the shorter working day and economic democracy? This possible relationship was not explored in depth and instead the connections were assumed. In contrast to this neglect of relationships and connections we have to indicate how the mass struggles against capitalism can become the basis of the mediations of the future society. What is it about the mass struggle that has the potential to become an integral part of the alternative to capitalism? The point is that the present is part of the future and the task of theory is to elaborate these possibilities. Marxists should also advocate the formation of popular methods of organisation that have a logical relation to the struggle and which can enhance the capacity to represent the future within the present.

Since the development of the anti-capitalist movement it has been effectively replaced by the formation of anti-war movements. This seemed to be a retrograde movement in that the aims of the anti-war movement were more limited and not based on the historical possibility of an alternative to future. However the anti-war movement was more popular and rooted within society. Its arguments were influential and also questioned the ethics of global capitalism in terms of the criticism of the various wars of intervention. The SWP recognised the effective decline of the anti-capitalist movement by becoming part of the leadership of the struggle against war. However the problems of strategy expressed by Callinicos’s accommodation to a reformist approach were not overcome. Furthermore the relation of the SWP to the Labour party was not resolved. But the more principled forces of the Marxist left were not able to take advantage of the strategic limitations of the SWP. Instead Marxism continued to fragment and become peripheral to the class struggle. The SWP was not able to grow despite its prominence in the anti-war movement, and this led to tensions within the organisation. But nobody in the SWP acknowledged that what had to be rejected was the reformist conception of programme of Callinicos. Indeed the approach of Callinicos was not challenged within the Marxist left in general. The following is put forward as a contribution to providing the principles for opposition to the reformist interpretation of Marxism:

(1)The continued importance of the revolutionary perspective e is not dependent on the latest trends within the process of struggle such as the anti-capitalist movement and the anti-war struggle and is instead based on a principled understanding of the character of capitalism. The social relations of capitalism are based on the capital-labour relation and the prospect of the transformation of this relation depends on the act of revolution combined with the advance of workers control and the related progress of the prospect of realisation of socialist relations of production.

(2)The effective rejection of the standpoint of this revolutionary perspective means the dilution of these objectives and their replacement by new principles and aims that attempt to suggest the precedence of reform. Callinicos argues that the logic of anti-capitalism despite its ambiguities is able to generate the momentum for the establishment of the pre-conditions for the relation of a society based on better values than those of global capitalism. However he cannot establish how the standpoint of the various trends of anti-capitalism can come together in order to form a cohesive social force that can challenge the power of capitalism. Instead of being able to relate the standpoint of programme to the importance of social trends and forces, he has to utilise the apparent ideological superiority of anti-capitalism as justification of the view that a mass movement will be formed on this basis and will challenge the power of capitalism. However this is an aspiration that resides only in Callinicos’s imagination. The actual mass movement is formed by the anti-war movement and it has more limited objectives which amount to an end to the various wars of intervention. Hence the strategic emphasis of the SWP on the anti-capitalist movement and Stop the War has not energised the class struggle. Instead in an impressionistic manner the SWP has adopted to the most popular and dynamic aspects of the mass movement. But the rest of the left is not able to articulate an alternative.

(3)The politic al problem has been that there has not been a unifying theme for the class struggle because of the legacy of important defeats and the general retreat of the working class. Hence militancy has been discredited and the very identity of the working class has been seriously challenged in ideological terms. This is precisely the climate that has enabled the opportunism of the SWP to thrive and to enable reformist programmes to prosper. The very seriousness of the present economic situation challenges this fashion for the dilution of Marxism. This is because the policy of the ruling class indicates that it is not possible to resolve the crisis in any way favourable to the working class within the limitations of the existing system. The alternatives are further retreat or revolution and communism. Consequently the task of principled Marxism is to develop a strategy that can relate the tasks of the mass movement with the aim of the transformation of social relations. IN this context we have to improve our arguments as to why revolution and communism are the answer and the continuation of capitalism would mean problems become more serious.

(4)The task is to develop a programme that can attempt to address the various strategic problems involved in the process of realisation of communism. Crucially how can a mass movement that has been defeated in the past become capable of becoming capable and willing to realise the revolutionary transformation of society? Hence theory has to rise to important challenges if it is to be able of addressing the problems of practice. Callinicos preferred support for reformism rather than addressing these questions in a principled manner.

(1)Alex Callinicos: An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003

(2)ACM p13

(3)ACM p85

(4)Hardt and Negri Multitude

(5)ACM p94

(6)ACM p96

(7)ACM p98

(8)ACM p99

(9)ACM p108

(10)ACM p110

(11)ACM p111

(12)ACM p115-122

(13)Alec Nove The Feasibility of Socialism

(14)ACM p122

(15)ACM p132

(16)ACM p134

(17)ACM p135

(18)ACM p139

(19)ACM p140

(20)ACM p142